AN ARGUS SPECIALIST PUBLICATION

SKELETON CREW

PORTRAITS OF HORROR

JULY 1990 £1.95

DAVID CRONENBERG
Exclusive Interview

STEPHEN KING
The Reploids

CLIVE BARKER
Art Portfolio

PLUS
At Home With John Bolton
Peter Straub Interview
Neil Gaiman Writes!
Sandman Feature
Introduction To Roleplaying
Stephen Gallagher Reviews

ISSN 0959-8006

07

9 770959 800006

JOHN BOLTON ©1990

USA $5.95

WHERE DAN DARE MEETS JIMI HENDRIX

Revolver

THE COMIC MAGAZINE FOR ADULTS

FIRST ISSUE: JUNE 23

ON SALE MONTHLY AT ALL GOOD NEWSAGENTS

£1.65

CREWCIFICTION

11 *The Reploids* by Stephen King
35 *Playing Good* by Mark Morris

MAIN ARTERIES

1 *Alas* by John Bolton
32 *Night Gallery* by Clive Barker
41 *Shame* by John Bolton

STRIPPED TO THE BONE

18 *The Pub At The End Of Time* by Lee Brimmicombe-Wood
26 *A Sprinkle of Dream Dust* by Matthew Pook
39 *At Home With John Bolton* by Dave Hughes
51 *Arkham Asylum* by Stuart Green
56 *Big Numbers* and *Taboo* reviewed by James Wallis

DICING WITH DEATH

45 *The Land Of Do-As-You-Please* by Jim Campbell

FILM CREW

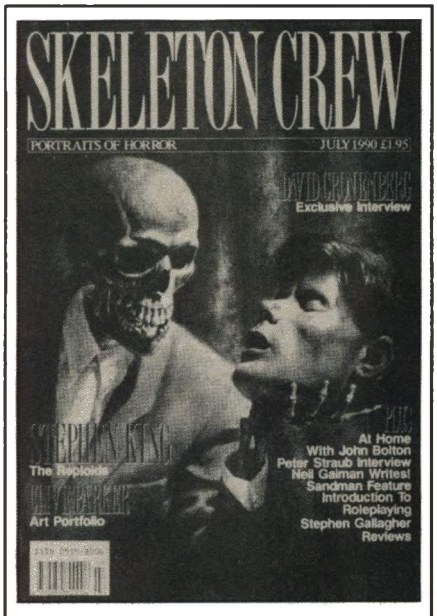
20 *The Killing Note* by Philip Nutman
25 *Black Sunday* feature
58 *Dick Tracy* and *BTTF3* reviewed by Adrian Rigelsford

THE GRIM READER

6 *Straub: Eerie Fields Forever?* by Dave Hughes and Nick Belcher
54 *Adventureland, The Night Of The Moonbow* and *By Bizarre Hands* reviewed by Stephen Gallagher

SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK

4 *Deaditorial* by Dave Hughes
5 *Dead Write* by Neil Gaiman
52 *Crew'll Lie*
60 *The Graveyard*
62 *Last Writes*



SKELETON CREW
Volume 2 Issue 1
July 1990

Skeleton Crew
Argus House
Boundary Way
Hemel Hempstead
HP2 7ST
Tel: (0442) 66551
Fax: (0442) 66998

Skeleton Crew is a monthly magazine appearing on the third Friday of each month. No part of this magazine may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted by any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher.

ORIGINATION
Project 3, Whitstable, Kent.

DISTRIBUTOR
Distributed by SM Distribution, 6 Leigham Court Road, London SW12 2PG.

PRINTER
Printed by Garnett Dickinson Print, Rotherham.

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Subscription Rates are £23.40 UK (inc. VAT post free), £31 Europe, £31.30 Middle East, £34.20 Far East, £31.80 (or $56.00 USA) Rest of the World. Airmail Rates on request from YC Subscriptions Department, Select Subscriptions Ltd., 5 River Park Estate, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 1HL, USA. Subscription Agent: Wise Owl Worldwide Publications, 4314 West 238th Street, Torrance CA 90505 USA.

SKELETON CREW — Portraits of Horror is © 1990 A.S.P.

AN Argus SPECIALIST PUBLICATION

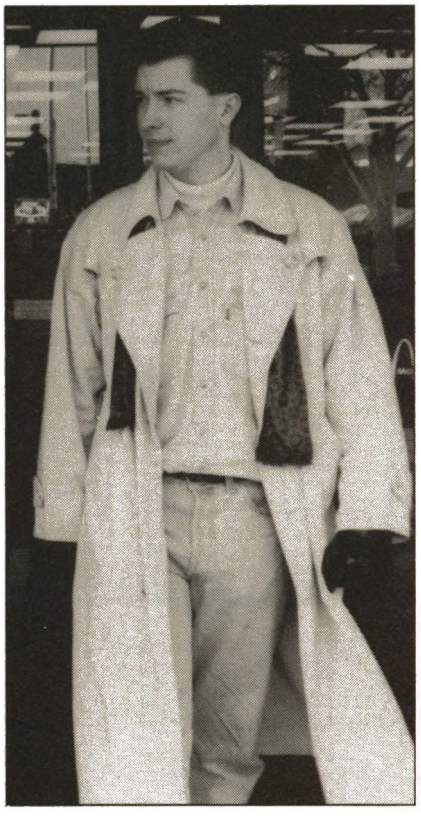


PHOTO: Seamus A Ryan

Dave Hughes eases the transformation between fanzine and professional magazine, and offers some advice for those who would scorn the amateurs amongst us.

"Skeleton Crew *has arisen not in spite of the demise of the fanzine but because of it*".

An ancient Chinese proverb says, 'Do not despise the snake, for who is to say it will not become a dragon? Or so THE WATER MARGIN would have us believe. It is a fair comment in any instance, from the traditional sheep-in-wolf's-clothing to the Trojan Horse. And it relates to this magazine in a special kind of way.

The old *Skeleton Crew* magazine — the A5 photocopied fanzine — was born out of a desire to put quality horror material out onto the market in as cheap a format as possible, both from the point of view of cover price and production cost. In the end, while I was planning the bold Swamp Thing issue (*Crew* VI), I realised that the quality of material I had for the issue (and for later issues) had finally eclipsed the quality of production I was able to attain personally. The answer was simple: *Skeleton Crew* had to die, in order that SKELETON CREW may live. In short, I took the magazine to Argus Specialist Publications, the proposal looked good, and now you have the magazine in your hands.

Some of the magazine has survived the transformation: a heading or three, the best of the contributors, and the odd column. The frequency of the magazine has gone from virtually bi-annual to monthly. Colour has been added, hopefully to good effect. The field of interest of the magazine has broadened to include comics, roleplaying games, movies and videos in the editorial content. And the price for an annual subscription has increased slightly.

But that is not the point I wish to make. The point is that SKELETON CREW has arisen not in spite of the demise of the fanzine but because of it. There are a *few* magazines, editors, writers and publishers who have launched directly onto the professional market, and good luck to them. But SKELETON CREW *proves* that the amateurs are *not* to be ignored. And *will not* be ignored, at least by this magazine. Time and again, authors who started writing for fanzines (Stephen Gallagher and Thomas Ligotti are two recent examples) have launched subsequently successful writing careers. More magazines are emerging from fandom to the world of professional publishing: SPEAKEASY, FANTASY TALES and INTERZONE being good examples. The fanzine editors and contributors of yesterday are the professional equivalents tomorrow. The contents of SKELETON CREW reflect a healthy attitude to fandom — our roots. Our regular *Necrofile* column looks at fan organisations, events and publications. It is just the sort of thing I wish the professional magazines around when I was publishing *Crew* had done. *Cold Storage* will be a regular look at horror from the fan's point of view. *Crew'll Lie* will cover news from fandom as well as from the professional side of horror. *Crewcifiction* and *Stripped To The Bone* will regularly feature new writers and artists, without discrimination. The small amount of fiction in each issue means that quality should — and will — be guaranteed, whereas setting ourselves a target of 5 or 6 pieces per issue may endanger quality control, as has happened with other magazines. Amateur and professional are both welcome in the new SKELETON CREW, as our contributors' list shows.

Contributions are welcome on all manner of topics and in all formats, from fiction to comic strips, articles to artwork, horror to humour. Material is also required for some of the regular columns (some of which may appear irregularly, as new columns are introduced). Don't think that just because we haven't asked you, we don't want you. Your views are welcome, particularly as *Post Mortem* (the mail section) kicks off again in CREW 2/2.

And as for the snake that has become a dragon? It's up to you decide whether our teeth are sharp or we're full of hot air. Either way, for better or for worse, SKELETON CREW is back. Tell your friends.

Dave Hughes!

Dead Write

Skeleton Crew is dead. Long live *Skeleton Crew.*

Skeleton Crew, the small press, duplicated, little black and white magazine is no more; but a huge colourful creature has turned up in its place, like a litle black and white caterpillar that went into a cocoon and emerged a death's head moth.

The crew are still skeletons, but the ship's been dry-docked, refitted, been painted pretty colours, and had the barnacles scraped off its bottom. Which is a cause for celebration, since our destination is the country of The Imagination (the only place worth exploring), and it needs all the travel brochures, road maps and tourist guides it can get.

It's a strange place, The Imagination. A lot of fun by day, when there are all sorts of reassuring and familiar sights and people around. But it's scary and cold at night, and places you knew perfectly well by daylight aren't the same after the sun's gone down. You can get lost easily there, and some people never get out again. You can hear a few of them, when the ghost moon shines, and the wind's in the right direction. They scream for a while, and then they stop. And in the silence you hear something else: the sound of something large and quiet, tentatively beginning to feed . . .

The Imagination is a dangerous place, after all, and you could use a guide.

However, a word in your ear: your guide through this world will be Dave Hughes, a young man in a slick suit, Captain of the *Skeleton Crew,* a man whose name is whispered in hushed tones wherever entrepreneurs foregather and cash registers go *tching*!

Thirty seconds' acquaintance with Dave Hughes will tell you all you need to know about him — and, I would hazard, his entire family tree. In the past, Hugheses undoubtedly guided people around the scarier catacombs, and only charged them a little more than the agreed price to show them out again; when the first Penny Dreadful accounts of Sweeney Todd's doings were being sold, a Hughes ancestor was doing the selling (and making a bundle on the souvenir meat pies), and a Hughes almost certainly pointed out to Heironymous Bosch that he'd be making himself a lot more dosh if he marketed his stuff as T-shirts.

If it's macabre or strange, frightening or awesome, Dave Hughes knows all about it, and will tell you everything he knows.

For a price.

In months to come, I am assured, he and the rest of your skeleton crew will give you swamp things and cops from hell, splatterpunks and steampunks, strange eldritch monstrosities from before the dawn of time and alien entities from constellations light-years distant: a monthly fix of the imagination — a welcome break from (and, more than occasionally, I trust, a harsh reminder of) the rigours of the world we are familiar with.

A skeletal hand grips the tiller.

A skeleton face grins at you from the fog.

Skeleton Crew is dead, which is as it should be. *Skeleton Crew* has risen from the grave, which is only right and proper considering the territory it's in. And undead and kicking, it'll be shambling into your newsagent every month.

But if you follow it in then Dave Hughes will be there, wearing a nice suit and radiating the kind of frank and guileless sincerity that a piranha uses to try and convince cattle that it's honestly just a goldfish, and he'll ask you, "You wanna see something *really* scary?"

And you'll nod, trying not to look nervous.

"That'll be one pound ninety-five," he'll say, and smile pleasantly.

Tching!

© Dave McKean 1987

Neil Gaiman, author of *Violent Cases, Black Orchid* and *Sandman*, is witty, intelligent, good-looking and — assuming he's susceptible to flattery — will be a regular contributor to the new *Skeleton Crew.*

"Dave Hughes will be there . . . and he'll ask you, 'You wanna see something* really *scary?'"

Dave Hughes and Nick Belcher were the editors of the original *Skeleton Crew* magazine. This interview is their first collaboration in more than a year.

Straub: Eerie Fields Forever?

Peter Straub is often considered to be a genre novelist very much in the shadow of Stephen King, with whom he shares many writing characteristics as well as a string of best selling novels. The comparison is fair, the observation that Straub owes any of his critical and financial success to his friend and occasional co-writer is not, for Straub is constantly proving his undisputed prowess in new areas, shrugging off categorisation and definition with each new book. Born four years before King in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Straub's first novel — MARRIAGES — was published shortly after his thirtieth birthday. A mainstream novel, it preceded a rejected book which made Straub's agent at the time suggest he move into the supernatural field — a genre of emerging popularity on both sides of the Atlantic (Straub was living in Crouch End, London during this period). The advice turned out to be sound, for his next two books — JULIA (1975; filmed two years later as FULL CIRCLE) and IF YOU COULD SEE ME NOW (1977) — won him critical acclaim and promising sales. It was his third genre novel, GHOST STORY (1979), however, which was to be his first best-seller and which would establish him as one of the most talked-about horror writers in the world. The motion picture helped the book achieve sales of well over a million copies, since which Straub has never looked back; two more novels followed in the next three years, by which time he and fellow best-seller Stephen King were both ready to try something new.

Their collaboration on the epic fantasy novel THE TALISMAN literally made publishing history in 1984 by becoming the fastest selling hardcover novel ever. A departure for both writers, it attracted phenomenal sales around the world and lead to Steven Spielberg's interest in a motion picture version, which is still being discussed. After this fantastic success, Straub was very quiet, while King went on to write several novels and dozens of short stories per year. Whatever Straub's secret project was, it was going to be something special. It was. KOKO took critics and genre fans by storm, earning him the World Fantasy Award and his greatest critical praise yet; many considered his well-timed look at the terror behind the Vietnam War to be his *magnum opus*. "I have a lock on the feeling," Straub said before the book's publication, and KOKO showed that he had an undeniable insight into the trauma of the war and the people whose lives it affected. It was an important enough work for him to write more on the subject, at least: BLUE ROSE, a novella based on the early life of one of KOKO's characters, appeared in Dennis Etchinson's CUTTING EDGE anthology, and many consider Straub's THE JUNIPER TREE, a disconcerting story about child abuse which appeared in Douglas E. Winter's PRIME EVIL, to be closely related to KOKO as well. Straub himself talks of KOKO as "the first of a trilogy", although the book that followed it, MYSTERY, showed yet another side of an already fascinating and compulsive writer. The title itself — chosen, Straub says, because of its literary double-meaning — encapsulates nicely the feel of his work. Many of the critics suggested that MYSTERY, packaged as a modern detective novel, would be Straub's summation or overview of detective stories in the same way that GHOST STORY was his overview of ghost stories. "Well, it isn't!" Straub laughs cheerfully. "I had no intention of doing that at all! I did, certainly, get to a point where I realised that MYSTERY was about a detective, and that there was a great, legendary detective at the centre of it, and that there was going to be an intricate puzzle just like the intricate puzzles woven into the classic mystery novels, and also that part of the book would involve the solving of an intricate crime." Having said that, Straub wanted to be sure that the supernatural definition of mystery was also there all along, so that it wasn't a "conventional crime novel". 'Conventional' is a word which should seem totally alien to this writer, for he seems to constantly surprise reviewers, as he did in the case of MYSTERY, soon to be published in paperback in Britain. "A lot of it is down to the marketing of the book", he says, and although he doesn't help out in the packaging of his books, his publishers (Penguin for KOKO and paperback giants Grafton for MYSTERY) seem to have an eye for the non-conformity of his work. "MYSTERY is essentially about what makes a detective; what sort of incidents and life history would

"Whatever Straub's secret project was, it was going to be something special . . ."

make somebody grow up to be a Sherlock Holmes-style detective. It seems to me that these are rare people, and that in real life we hardly have any." He challenges me to name any two. "I can't even name one!", he laughs in his delightful, almost childlike way. "I think that if you met one of those great legendary detectives it would be like meeting Superman. You know, somebody who is readily available in myth but hardly ever encountered in real life. You would be in awe! In ordinary detective novels, nobody's ever surprised; they just say, 'Ah, you're Nero Wolfe' or 'How do you do, Mr Holmes'? They never stand there with their jaw open and say, 'That's one of those!' That's something I really wanted to get across". There is also a sense to MYSTERY that can be found in virtually every other book Peter Straub has written — the sense that what we see of reality "isn't quite it" or, as he himself says, "There are realms beyond this one which sometimes announce themselves. In real life this happens to people: they suddenly see what is really before them, and that is always something spectacularly good. They see a world overflowing with energy and beauty and life". Thus on the first page of MYSTERY, the character of Tom Passmore jumps down from a milk cart and sees, just for a moment, the 'world beneath this world' — in much the same way that Calhoun Mooney in WEAVEWORLD first glimpses the Fugure. I ask Straub of he believes in a 'world beneath this world' and he tells me that he does. "I believe that, as long as there have been human beings, we've always had too much work to do, or our emotions have been too screwed up, or habit has dulled us, and we just can't see the wonder of things. I think children can; I think they can open their eyes and see something . . . spectacular." The way he emphasises the last word could almost make me get religion. Straub explains that the central character of MYSTERY becomes involved in a case which will ultimately lead to a better understanding of his own background, a plot which reminds me of Von Hjortsberg's classic horror-thriller FALLING ANGEL. Straub agrees; "but MYSTERY isn't so gaudy!"

Is he, in general, a tough critic of other writers' work? "I don't know. I *do* read carefully, and I read the same way I did when I was six years old; that is, I want the book to be the world for a while, I want to forget that this is a physical artifact in front of me; I want to just fall into it and have it replace the world. If a guy can do that then in my

"There are realms beyond this one which sometimes announce themselves."

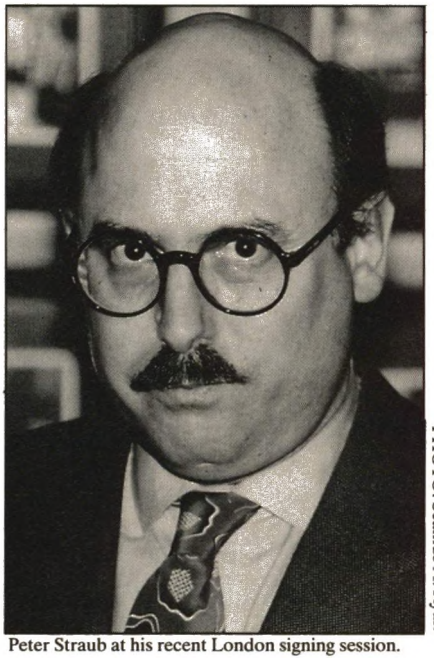


PHOTO: Seamus A. Ryan

Peter Straub at his recent London signing session.

book he's a good writer!" He cites Dickens, Tolstoy and King as three writers who can do that for him; he makes the peculiar coupling of the three names seen somehow *right*. "Good writers can do that, and that's largely what makes them good writers — they devote details with such richness and absoluteness that you can *see* them. When I'm writing, and I know it's going well, I can just . . . see it. I am not present. I am just the medium, in a way." This is one of the romanticisms his friend Stephen King often describes when talking about his writing. "Yeah, I think a lot of writers have this experience, and also a lot of musicians: you just stand next to yourself and watch it happen." He describes writing as a magical experience, reminding me momentarily of THE TALISMAN. How did he find King as co-writer on the book? "Fantastic. Exhilerating. But slow," he says. "When you write you're used to being in control, to being on your own and working it all out yourself. It's very hard to suddenly surrender control to somebody, even someone as brilliant as King!" I point out, as he lights yet another cigarette, gazing at my Zippo lighter with childlike delight, that whenever he uses the word "write", he makes hand motions. Does he always write by hand, like British contemporaries Clive Barker and Ramsey Campbell? "I really love handwriting because it's physical; because there is a kind of sensuousness to touching a pencil to a page and it also looks nice when it's out there on the page! It looks like something made." He has a computer which, he says, he "loves dearly". He uses this "about half the time, because it's fast and you can be brave. It's very easy to make changes. "His writing method seems to change depending on the style employed for each book: the last half of KOKO was handwritten, whereas the first half of MYSTERY used ink instead of ribbon. Returning to handwriting after a spell at the keyboard is like going home, he says: "It's like Mom!"

As a 'horror writer' — a term he appears comfortable with — how does he feel about the good reaction KOKO and MYSTERY have had from the horror genre, since neither of them are horror novels *per se*? "It seems to me that the more I look around and the more I hear other horror writers talk, the clearer it becomes that horror has just widened its horizons in a way that, to me, is breathtaking, because what I objected to before was that it was so stupidly narrow, and that readers seemed to demand the repetition of certain kinds of horror; the very basic and not very literary experiences." He agrees that a great deal of the literary acceptance of the horror novel is thanks to publishers at last packaging horror books as mainstream concerns. In fact, as I point out, one tenth of the best selling titles in both 1989 and the Eighties as a whole were from the genre. "I'm all for it!" he enthuses, giggling again. "The reason for the broadening out is that more and more writers — and hence, more of the audience — see horror as a way of seeing things. It isn't just a matter of the specifics of the genre being reiterated over and over again, it's a way of looking at things; it is, if you like, a reverse of the Polyanna attitude: it sees that life can be really uncomfortable, dangerous and painful; that the world is not organised for our benefit; that we are just plonked down in the middle of it and we have to deal with it." Is that how he sees things, or just how he sees them as a novelist? "No, my life gave me that vision. It's wonderful when things go well and, in general, my life has gone well, but still people die." His ominous emphasis on the word makes us all laugh. "One's parents die; one's lovers die, or go mad. Pain happens. Nobody gets through life without a few scars, or without experiencing profoundly unhappy and unsettling things. And in a way that's good, because it wakes you up and makes you pay attention. It's very useful."

If horror is now universally accepted as 'a way of looking at things', can horror literature be compared to mainstream literature? I use Straub's own mention of Dickens, Tolstoy and King as an example of an acceptance that would have been almost laughable a few years ago. "I think all books should be read equally. It is very much a question of individual talent and how much there is of it. Steve King does have a huge talent, obviously. Sometimes he does dumb things, but then Dickens did dumb things too, now and then. But sometimes the literary worth of a horror novel can be lost because people are too busy telling you how scared they were. Every book ought to be judged on its own merits. All good books are the same kind. I think Raymond Chandler's THE LONG GOOD-BYE deserves to be mentioned in the same sentence as ANNA KARENINA. They're very different but they both have something really living and surprising, and of value as a book. So I always thought that really good horror novels should also be considered in that way." Straub agrees that things have changed dramatically, particularly since he started writing. "My books were always reviewed as 'a surprisingly good book given the subject matter. I couldn't stop reading it. I don't know why!'" The problem is being eradicated, as Straub discovered with the hardcover reviews of MYSTERY. "Better than half the reviewers were able to see that it wasn't just a detective novel; that there is another layer of feeling, another thematic layer at work." If he were a crime writer, would they have picked up on that, I ask? "No. And that's why I'm a horror writer."

". . . horror has just widened its horizons in a way that, to me, is breathtaking."

STANDARD GAMES
P·B·M

Adventurer Kings

The Play-by-Mail Game of

Epic Adventure and Imperial Conquest

- **Heroic adventure on a grand scale**
- **Conquest, fulfilment of quests, duels, all set in a medieval fantasy land.**
- **Choose to play an Elf, Dwarf, Orc or Human**
- **15 distinct character abilities which can be freely combined**
- **15 army types**
- **25 magic spells**
- **100 individual characters**
- **10% of turns fees go into a prize fund which will be shared amongst the holders of high office at the end of the game**
- **Over 60 magic artifacts and 60 technological advances**
- **Kings can lead armies into campaigns of conquest or defence**
- **Adventure in hidden lairs, defended by dangerous monsters**
- **Role-playing interaction between players**
- **No two game worlds alike**
- **Full colour boxed start-up, which includes a 32 page rule book, map and start-up sheet**

Adventurer Kings is a game for up to 12 players, set in a world filled with heroes, magic, treasure, monsters and armies. You will learn about 5 different types of magic from White, through elemental to Necromancy, all with their own spells. Practise special abilities like Druid and Thief, combat skills like Tactical and Archery. You can choose to be good, evil, pagan and more. Hire heroes and battle in single-handed combat against guardian monsters.

Direct your own destiny in Adventurer Kings — strategy, role-playing, diplomacy. It's all there for you to enjoy. Will you be the next World Emperor .... or perhaps you will gain the title of Imperial Grand Marshal, or Arch-Mage Palatine, or perhaps one of the other 6 game titles decided at the end of each game.

***Direct from the* USA ....**

Now available in the U.K. for the first time, we offer one of the finest play-by-mail games anywhere in the world. We are so confident that you will be completely delighted with this new game, that we offer a

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE!!

ADVENTURER KINGS - Play the free turns and decide to drop out of the game and we will refund your start-up fee!! If you have ever wanted to try a play-by-mail game, don't hesitate, send for the start-up now. If you have previously been disappointed by a pbm - try this one, it'll open up a whole new gaming world.

If you have a PC or compatible computer, you can play by computer disc! We supply a program which allows you to view your turns in a graphically entertaining way. To play by electronic mail, telephone our 24 hr a day Bulletin Board on 0582 422912 8 data bits, 1 stop bits all speeds up to 2400/2400.

Fees: Start-up package (which includes 2 free turns) plus starting turn £6.00. Further turns £3.00 each, no extras.

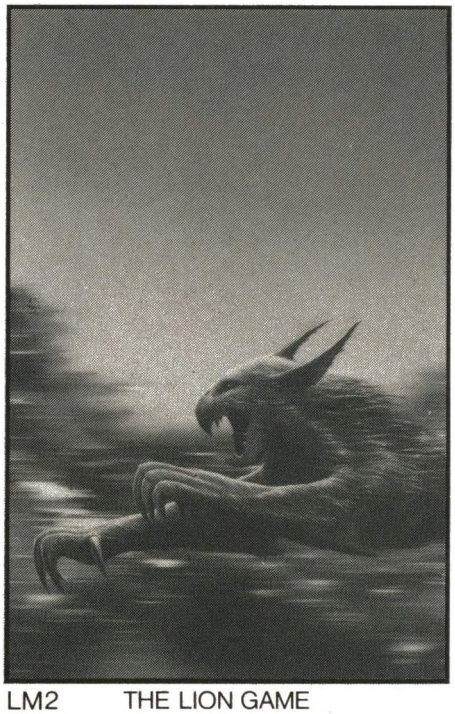
Send your (cheque/cash/postal order, no coins please), to: Dept 6 STANDARD GAMES PBM, Arlon House, Station Road, Kings Langley, Herts WD4 8LF., or if you're STILL not convinced send a stamped addressed envelope for more details).

© Ark Royal Games,

Moderated under licence in the U.K. by STANDARD GAMES P·B·M

TIM WHITE ART PRINTS

LM1 DARK SIDE OF THE SUN



LM2 THE LION GAME

LM3 PURSUED

LM4 BLUEBELLS

Superb full colour reproductions
Printed on high quality art paper (170gsm)
Print size 432 x 286 mm

Please supply me with the following prints

☐ LM1 ☐ LM2 ☐ LM3 ☐ LM4

Each print is £1.99 plus £0.99 p&p (for 1 - 4 prints)

Cheques/postal orders payable to LIGHTNING MAN

Name .....

Address .....

.....

Send to LIGHTNING MAN PO Box 79 Chatham Kent ME5 9BW

LIGHTNING MAN

Stephen KING

the Reploids

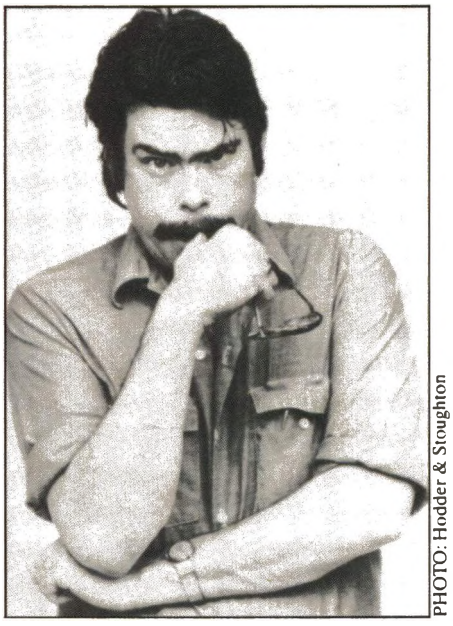


PHOTO: Hodder & Stoughton

Stephen King's latest novel is *The Stand*, a 1007-page unabridged edition of his own, earlier, bestseller. *The Reploids* is his first story in a British magazine for several years.

No one knew exactly how long it had been going on. Not long. Two days, two weeks; it couldn't have been much longer than that, Cheyney reasoned. Not that it mattered. It was just that people got to watch a little more of the show with the added thrill of knowing the show was real. When the United States — the whole world — found out about the Reploids, it was pretty spectacular. Just as well, maybe. These days, unless it's spectacular, a thing can go on damned near forever. It is neither believed nor disbelieved. It is simply part of the weird Godhead mantra that made up the accelerating flow of events and experience as the century neared its end. It's harder to get people's attention. It takes machine-guns in a crowded airport or a live grenade rolled up the aisle of a busload of nuns stopped at a road-block in some Central American country overgrown with guns and greenery. The Reploids became national — and international — news on the morning of November 30, 1989, after what happened during the first two chaotic minutes of the *Tonight Show* taping in Beautiful Downtown Burbank, California, the night before.

☆ ☆ ☆

The floor manager watched intently as the red sweep second-hand moved upward toward the twelve. The studio audience clock-watched as intently as the floor manager. When the red sweep second-hand crossed the twelve, it would be five o'clock and taping of the umpty-umptieth *Tonight Show* would commence.

As the red second-hand passed the eight, the audience stirred and muttered with its own peculiar sort of stage fright. After all, they represented *America*, didn't they? Yes!

"Let's have it quiet, people, please," the floor manager said pleasantly, and the audience quieted like obedient children. Doc Severinsen's drummer ran off a fast little riff on his snare and then held his sticks easily between thumbs and fingers, wrists loose, watching the floor manager instead of the clock, as the show-people always did. For crew and performers, the floor manager was the clock. When the second-hand passed the ten, the floor manager counted down aloud to four, and then held up three fingers, two fingers, one finger . . . and then a clenched fist from which one finger pointed dramatically at the audience. An APPLAUSE sign lit up, but the studio audience was primed to whoop it up; it would have made no difference if it had been written in Sanskrit.

So things started off just as they were supposed to start off: dead on time. This was not so surprising, there were crew members on the *Tonight Show* who, had they been L.A.P.D. officers, could have retired with full benefits. The Doc Severinsen band, one of the best show-bands in the world, launched into the familiar theme: *Ta-da-da-Da-da* . . . and the large, rolling voice of Ed McMahon cried enthusiastically: "From Los Angeles, entertainment capital of the world, it's *The Tonight Show* live, with Johnny Carson! Tonight Johnny's guests are actress Cybil Shepherd of *Moonlighting*!" Excited applause from the audience. "Pee Wee Herman"" A fresh wave of applause, this time including hoots of joy from Pee Wee's rooting section. "From Germany, the Flying Schnauzers, the world's only canine acrobats!" Increased applause, with a mixture of laughter from the audience. "Not to mention Doc Severinsen, the world's only Flying Bandleader, and his canine band!"

The band members not playing horns obediently barked. The audience laughed harder, applauded harder.

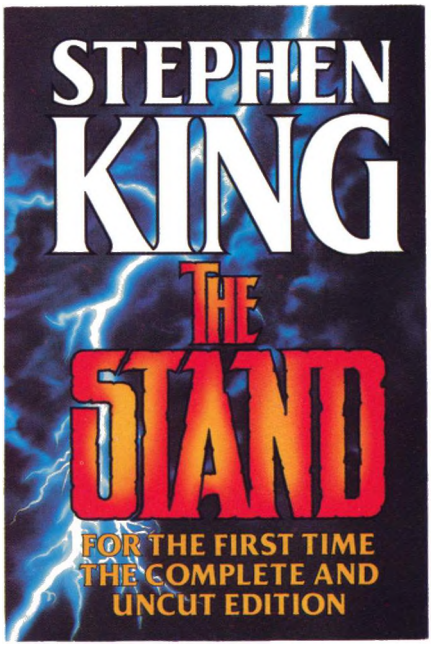
In the control room of Studio C, no one was laughing.

A man in a loud sport-coat with a shock of curly black hair was standing in the wings, idly snapping his fingers and looking across the stage at Ed, but that was all.

The director signaled for Number Two Cam's medium shot on Ed for the umpty-umptieth time, and there was Ed on the ON SCREEN monitors. He barely heard someone mutter, "Where the hell *is* he?" before Ed's rolling tones announced, *also* for the umpty-umptieth time: "And now *heeeere's* JOHNNY!"

Wild applause from the audience.

Courtesy of Hodder & Stoughton



"Camera Three," the director snapped.

"But there's only that — "

"Camera *Three*, goddammit!"

Camera Three came up on the ON SCREEN monitor, showing every TV director's private nightmare, a dismally empty stage . . . and then someone, some stranger, was striding confidently into that empty space, just as if he had every right in the world to be there, filling it with unquestionable presence, charm and authority. But, whoever he was, he was most definitely *not* Johnny Carson. Nor was it any of the other familiar faces TV and studio audiences had grown used to during Johnny's absences. This man was taller than Johnny, and instead of the familiar ilver hair, there was a luxuriant cap of almost Pan-like black curls. The stranger's hair was so black that in places it seemed to glow almost blue, like Superman's hair in the comic-books. The sport-coat he wore was not quide loud enough to put him in the Pleesda-Meetcha-Is-This-The-Missus? car salesman category, but Carson would not have touched it with a twelve-foot pole.

The audience applause continued, but it first seemed to grow slightly bewildered, and then clearly began to thin.

"What the hell's going on?" someone in the control room asked. The directory simply watched, mesmerized.

Instead of the familiar swing of the invisible golf-club, punctuated by a drum-riff and high-spirited hoots of approval from the studio audience, this dark-haired, broad-shouldered, loud-jacketed, unknown gentleman began to move his hands up and down, eyes flicking rhythmically from his moving palms to a spot just above his head — he was miming a juggler with a lot of fragile items in the air, and doing it with the easy grace of the long-time showman. It was only something in his face, something as subtle as a shadow, that told you the objects were eggs or something, and would break if dropped. It was, in fact, very like the way Johnny's eyes followed the invisible ball down the invisible fairway, registering one that had been righteously stroked . . . unless, of course, he chose to vary the act, which he could and did do from time to time, and without even breathing hard.

He made a business of dropping the last egg, or whatever the fragile object was, and his eyes followed it to the floor with exaggerated dismay. Then, for a moment, he froze. Then he glanced toward Cam Three Left . . . toward Doc and the orchestra, in other words.

After repeated viewings of the videotape, Dave Cheyney came to what seemed to him to be

"Then, for a moment, he froze . . ."

an irrefutable conclusion, although many of his colleagues — including his partner — questioned it.

"He was waiting for a sting," Cheyney said. "Look, you can see it on his face. It's as old as burlesque."

His partner, Pete Jacoby, said, "I thought burlesque was where the *girl* with the heroin habit took off her clothes while the *guy* with the heroin habit played the trumpet."

Cheyney gestured at him impatiently. "Think of the lady that used to play the piano in the silent movies, then. Or the one that used to do schmaltz on the organ during the radio soaps."

Jacoby looked at him, wide-eyed. "Did they have those things when you were a kid, daddy?" he asked in a falsetto voice.

"Will you for once be serious?" Cheyney asked him. "Because this is a serious thing we got here, I think."

"What we got here is very simple. We got a nut."

"No," Cheyney said, and hit rewind on the VCR again with one hand while he lit a fresh cigarette with the other. "What we got is a seasoned performer who's mad as hell because the guy on the snare dropped his cue." He paused thoughtfully and added: "Christ, Johnny does it all the time. And if the guy who was supposed to lay in the sting dropped his cue, I think he'd look the same way."

* * *

By then it didn't matter. The stranger who wasn't Johnny Carson had time to recover, to look at a flabbergasted Ed McMahon and say, "The moon must be full tonight, Ed — do you think —" And that was when the NBC security guards came out and grabbed him.

"Hey! What do you think you're —"

But by then they had dragged him away.

In the control room of Studio C, there was total silence. The audience monitors picked up the same silence. Camera Four was swung toward the audience, and showed a picture of one hundred silent faces at Camera Two. The one medium-close on Ed-McMahon, showed a man who looked almost cosmically befuddled.

The director took a package of Winstons from his breast pocket, took one out, put it in his mouth, took it out again and reversed it so the filter was facing away from him, and abruptly bit

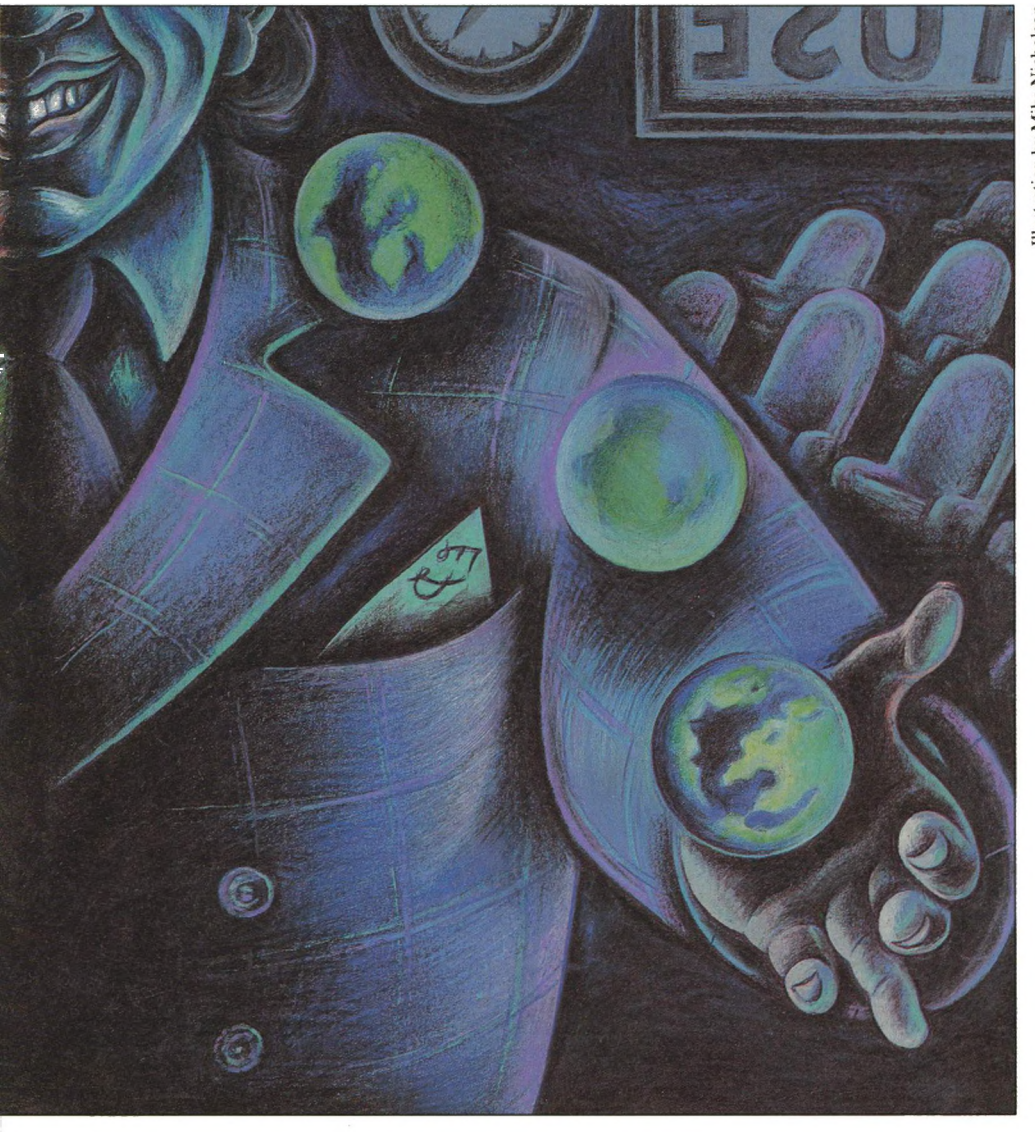


Illustration by Mike Nicholson

"The stranger who wasn't Johnny Carson had time to recover . . ."

the cigarette in two. He threw the filtered half in one direction and spat the unfiltered half in another.

"Get up a show from the library with Rickles," he said. "No Joan Rivers. And if I see Totie Fields, someone's going to get fired." Then he strode away, head down. He shoved a chair with such violence on his way out of the control room that it struck the wall, rebounded, nearly fractured the skull of a white-faced intern from USC, and fell on its side.

One of the PA's told the intern in a low voice, "Don't worry; that's just Fred's way of committing honorable *seppuku*."

* * *

The man who was not Johnny Carson was taken, bellowing loudly not about his *lawyer* but his *team* of lawyers, to the Burbank Police Station. In Burbank, as in Beverly Hills and Hollywood Heights, there is a wing of the police station which is known simply as "special security functions." This may cover many aspects of the sometimes crazed world of Tinsel-Town law enforcement. The cops don't like it, the cops don't respect it . . . but they ride with it. You don't shit where you eat. Rule One.

"Special security functions" might be the place to which a coke-snorting movie-star whose last picture grossed seventy million dollars might be conveyed; the place to which the battered wife of an extremely powerful film producer might be taken; it was the place to which the man with the dark crop of curls was taken.

The man who showed up in Johnny Carson's place on the stage of Studio C on the afternoon of November 29th identified himself as Ed Paladin, speaking the name with the air of one who expects everyone who hears it to fall on his or her knees and, perhaps, genuflect. His California driver's licens, Blue Cross-Blue Shield card, Amex and Diners' Club cards, also identified him as Edward Paladin.

His trip from Studio C ended, at least temporarily, in a room in the Burbank P.D.'s "special security" area. The room was panelled with tough plastic that almost did look like mahogany and furnished with a low, round couch and tasteful chairs. There was a cigarette box on the glass-topped coffee table filled with Dunhills, and the magazines included *Fortune* and *Variety* and *Vogue* and *Billboard* and *GQ*. The wall-to-wall carpet wasn't really ankle-deep but looked it, and there was a CableView guide on top of the large-screen TV. There was a bar (now locked), and a very nice neo-Jackson Pollock painting on one of the walls. The walls, however, were of drilled cork, and the mirror above the bar was a little bit too large and a little bit too shiny to be anything but a piece of one-way glass.

The man who called himself Ed Paladin stuck his hands in his just-too-loud sport-coat pockets, looked around disgustedly, and said: "An interrogation room by any other name is still an interrogation room."

Detective 1st Grade Richard Cheyney looked at him calmly for a moment. When he spoke, it was in the soft and polite voice that had earned him the only half-kidding nickname "Detective to the Stars." Part of the reason he spoke this way was because he genuinely liked and respected show people. Part of the reason was because he didn't trust them. Half the time they were lying they didn't know it.

"Could you tell us, please, Mr. Paladin, how you got on the set of *The Tonight Show*, and where Johnny Carson is?"

"Who's Johnny Carson?"

Pete Jacoby — who wanted to be Henny Youngman when he grew up, Cheyney often thought — gave Cheyney a momentary dry look every bit as good as a Jack Benny deadpan. Then he looked back at Edward Paladin and said, "Johnny Carson's the guy who used to be Mr. Ed. You know, the talking horse? I mean, a lot of people know about Mr. Ed, the famous talking horse, but an awful lot of people don't know that he went to Geneva to have a species-change operation and when he came back he was —"

Cheyney often allowed Jacoby his routines (there was really no other word for them, and Cheyney remembered one occasion when Jacoby had gotten a man charged with beating his wife and infant son to death laughing so hard that tears of mirth rather than remorse were rolling down his cheeks as he signed the confession that was going to put the bastard in jail for the rest of his life), but he wasn't going to tonight. He didn't have to *see* the flame under his ass; he could feel it, and it was being turned up. Pete was maybe a little slow on the uptake about some things, and maybe that was why he wasn't going to make Detective 1st for another two or three years . . . if he ever did.

Some ten years ago a really awful thing had happened in a little nothing town called Chowchilla. Two people (they had walked on two legs, anyway, if you could believe the newsfilm) had hijacked a busload of kids, buried them live, and then had demanded a huge sum of money. Otherwise, they said, those kiddies could just stay where they were and swap baseball trading cards until their air ran out. That one had ended happily, but it could have been a nightmare. And God knew Johnny Carson was no busload of schoolkids, but the case had the same kind of fruitcake appeal: here was that rare event about which both the *Los Angeles Times-Mirror* and *The National Enquirer* would hobnob on their front pages. What Pete didn't understand was that something extremely rare had happened to them: in the world of day-to-day police work, a world where almost everything came in shades of gray, they had suddenly been placed in a situation of stark and simple contrasts: produce within twenty-four hours, thirty-six at the outside, or watch the Feds come in . . . and kiss your ass goodbye.

Things happened so rapidly that even later he wasn't completely sure, but he believed both of them had been going on the unspoken presumption, even then, that Carson had been kidnapped and this guy was part of it.

"'Special security functions' might be the place to which a coke-snorting movie-star might be conveyed . . ."

"We're going to do it by the numbers, Mr. Paladin," Cheyney said, and although he was speaking to the man glaring up at him from one of the chairs (he had refused the sofa at once), his eyes flicked briefly to Pete. They had been partners for nearly twelve years, and a glance was all it took.

No more Comedy Store routines, Pete.

Message received.

"First comes the Miranda Warning," Cheyney said pleasantly. "I am required to inform you that you are in the custody of the Burbank City Police. Although not required to do so immediately, I'll add that a preliminary charge of trespassing —"

"*Trespassing*!" An angry flush burst over Paladin's face.

"— on property both owned and leased by the National Broadcasting Company has been lodged against you. I am Detective 1st Grade Richard Cheyney. This man with me is my partner, Detective 2nd Grade Peter Jacoby. We'd like to interview you."

"Interrogate me is what you mean."

"I only have one question, as far as interrogation goes," Cheyney said. "Otherwise, I only want to interview you at this time. In other words, I have one question relevant to the charge which has been lodged; the rest deal with other matters."

"Well, what's the freaking questions?"

"That wouldn't be going by the numbers," Jacoby said.

Cheyney said: "I am required to tell you that you have the right —"

"To have my lawyer here, you bet," Paladin said. "And I just decided that before I answer a single freaking question, and that includes where I went to lunch today and what I had, he's going to be in here. Albert K. Dellums."

He spoke this name as if it should rock both detectives back on their heels, but Cheyney had never heard of him and could tell by Pete's expression that he hadn't either.

Whatever sort of crazy this Ed Paladin might turn out to be, he was no dullard. He saw the quick glances which passed between the two detectives and read them easily. *You know him?* Cheyney's eyes asked Jacoby's, and Jacoby's replied, *Never heard of him in my life.*

For the first time an expression of perplexity — it was not fear, not yet — crossed Mr. Edward Paladin's face.

"Al Dellums," he said, raising his voice like some Americans overseas who seem to believe they can make the waiter understand if they only speak loudly enough and slowly enough. "Al Dellums of Dellums, Carthage, Stoneham, and Tayloe. I guess I shouldn't be all that surprised that you haven't heard of him. He's only one of the most important, well-known lawyers in the country." Paladin shot the left cuff of his just-slightly-too-loud sport-coat and glanced at his watch. "If you reach him at home, gentelmen, he'll be pissed. If you have to call his club — and I think this is his club-night — he's going to be pissed like a *bear*."

Cheyney was not impressed by bluster. If you could sell it at a quarter a pound, he never would have had to turn his hand at another day's work. But even a quick peek had been enough to show him that the watch Paladin was wearing was not just a Rolex but a Rolex Midnight Star. It might be an imitation, of course, but his gut told him it was genuine. Part of it was his clear impression that Paladin wasn't trying to make an impression — he'd wanted to see what time it was, no more or less than that. And if the watch was the McCoy . . . well, there were cabin-cruisers you could buy for less. What was a man who could afford a Rolex Midnight Star doing involved in something weird like this?

Now *he* was the one who must have been showing perplexity clear enough for Paladin to read it, because the man smiled — a humorless skinning-back of the lips from the capped teeth. "The air-conditioning in here's pretty nice," he said, crossing his legs and flicking the crease absently. "You guys want to enjoy it while you can. It's pretty muggy walking a beat out in Watts, even this time of year."

In a harsh and abrupt tone utterly unlike his bright pitter-patter Comedy Store voice, Jacoby said: "Shut your mouth, jag-off."

Paladin jerked around and stared at him, eyes wide. And again Cheyney would have sworn it had been years since anyone had spoken to this man in that way. Years since anyone would have *dared*.

"What did you say?"

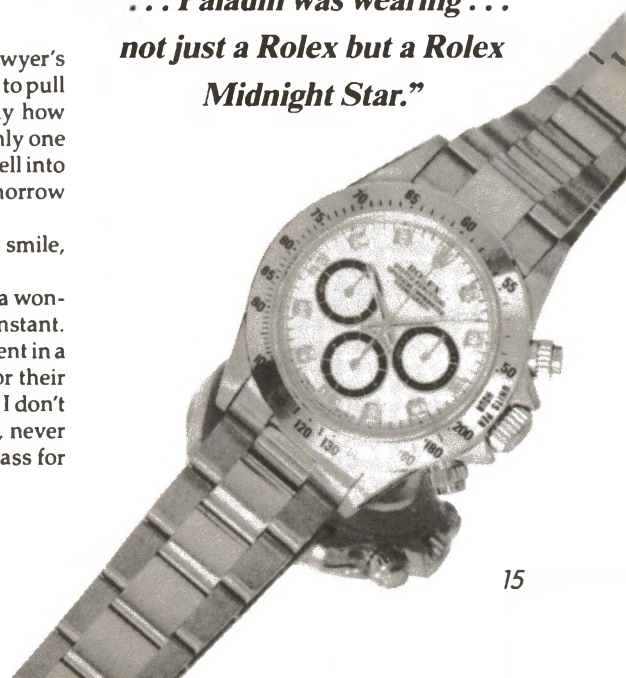
"I said shut your mouth when Detective Cheyney is talking to you. Give me your lawyer's number. I'll see that he is called. In the meantime, I think you need to take a few seconds to pull your head out of your ass and look around and see exactly where you are and exactly how serious the trouble is that you are in. I think you need to reflect on the fact that, while only one charge has been lodged against you, you could be facing enough to put you in the slam well into the next century . . . and you could be facing them before the sun comes up tomorrow morning."

Jacoby smiled. It wasn't his howaya-folks-anyone-here-from-Duluth Comedy Store smile, either. Like Paladin's, it was a brief pull of the lips, no more.

"You're right — the air conditioning in here isn't half bad. Also, the TV works and for a wonder the people on it don't look like they're seasick. The coffee's good — perked, not instant. Now, if you want to make another two or three wisecracks, you can wait for your legal talent in a holding cell on the fifth floor. On Five, the only entertainment consists of kids crying for their mommies and winos puking on their sneakers. I don't know who you think you are and I don't care, because as far as I'm concerned, you're nobody. I never saw you before in my life, never heard of you before in my life, and if you push me enough I'll widen the crack in your ass for you."

"That's enough," Cheyney said quietly.

". . . Paladin was wearing . . . not just a Rolex but a Rolex Midnight Star."



"I'll retool it so you could drive a Ryder van up there, *Mister* Paladin — you understand me? Can you grok that?"

Now Paladin's eyes were all but hanging from their sockets on stalks. His mouth was open. Then, without speaking, he removed his wallet from his coat pocket (*some kind of lizard-skin,* Cheyney thought, *two months' salary . . . maybe three*). He found his lawyer's card (the home number was jotted on the back, Cheyney noted — it was most definitely not part of the printed matter on the front) and handed it to Jacoby. His fingers now showed the first observable tremor.

"Pete?"

Jacoby looked at him and Cheyney saw it was no act; Paladin had actually succeeded in pissing his easy-going partner off. No mean feat.

"Make the call yourself."

"Okay." Jacoby left.

Cheyney looked at Paladin and was suddenly amazed to find himself feeling sorry for the man. Before he had looked perplexed; now he looked both stunned and frightened, like a man who wakes from a nightmare only to discover the nightmare is still going on.

* * *

"Watch closely," Cheyney said after the door had closed, "and I'll show you one of the mysteries of the West. West L.A., that is."

He moved the neo-Pollock and revealed not a safe but a toggle switch. He flicked it, then let the painting slide back into place.

"That's one-way glass," Cheyney said, cocking a thumb at the too— large mirror over the bar.

"I am not terribly surprised to hear that," Paladin said, and Cheyney reflected that, while the man might have some of the shitty egocentric habits of the Veddy Rich and Well-Known in L.A., he was also a near-superb actor: only a man as experienced as he was himself could have told how really close Paladin was to the ragged edge of tears.

But not of guilt, that was what was so puzzling, so goddamn maddening.

Of perplexity.

He felt that absurd sense of sorrow again, absurd because it pre— supposed the man's innocence: he did not want to be Edward Paladin's nightmare, did not want to be the heavy in a Kafka novel where suddenly nobody knows where they are, or why they are there.

"I can't do anything about the glass," Cheyney said. He came back and sat down across the coffee table from Paladin, "but I've just killed the sound. So it's you talking to me and vice-versa." He took a pack of Kents from his breast pocket, stuck one in the corner of his mouth, then offered the pack to Paladin. "Smoke?"

Paladin picked up the pack, looked it over, and smiled. "Even my old brand. I haven't smoked one since the night Yul Brynner died, Mr.Cheyney. I don't think I want to start again now."

Cheyney put the pack back into his pocket. "Can we talk?" he asked.

Paladin rolled his eyes. "Oh my God, it's Joan Raiford."

"Who?"

"Joan Raiford. You know, "I took Elizabeth Taylor to Marine World and when she saw Shamu the Whale she asked me if it came with vegetables?" I repeat, Detective Cheyney: grow up. I have no reason in the world to believe that switch is anything but a dummy. My God, how innocent do you think I am?"

Joan Raiford? Is that what he really said? Joan Raiford?

"What's the matter?" Paladin asked pleasantly. He crossed his legs the other way. "Did you perhaps think you saw a clear path? Me breaking down, maybe saying I'd tell everything, everything, just don't let 'em fry me, copper?"

With all the force of personality he could muster, Cheyney said: "I believe things are very wrong here, Mr.Paladin. You've got them wrong and I've got them wrong. When your lawyer gets here, maybe we can sort them out and maybe we can't. Most likely we can't. So listen to me, and for God's sake use your brain. I gave you the Miranda Warning. You said you wanted your lawyer present. If there was a tape turning, I've buggered my own case. Your lawyer would have to say just one word — *enticement* — and you'd walk free, whatever has happened to Carson. And I could go to work as a security guard in one of those flea-bitten little towns down by the border."

"You say that," Paladin said, "but I'm no lawyer."

But . . . Convince me, his eyes said. *Yeah, let's talk about this, let's see if we can't get together, because you're right, something is weird. So . . . convince me.*

"Is your mother alive?" Cheyney asked abruptly.

"What — yes, but what does that have to —"

"You talk to me or I'm going to personally take two CHP motorcycle cops and the three of us are going to rape your mother tomorrow!" Cheyney screamed. *"I'm personally going to take her up the ass! Then we're going to cut off her tits and leave them on the front lawn! So you better talk!"*

Paladin's face was as white as milk: a white so white it is nearly blue.

"Now are you convinced?" Cheyney asked softly. "I'm not crazy. I'm not going to rape your mother. But with a statement like that on a reel of tape, you could say you were the guy on the grassy knoll in Dallas and the Burbank police wouldn't produce the tape. I want to *talk* to you, man. What's going on here?"

Paladin shook his head dully and said, "I don't know."

* * *

"He took a pack of Kents from his breast pocket, stuck one in the corner of his mouth . . ."

In the room behind the one-way glass, Jacoby joined Lieutenant McEachern, Ed McMahon (still looking stunned), and a cluster of technical people at a bank of high-tech equipment. The L.A.P.D. chief of police and the mayor were rumored to be racing each other to Burbank.

"He's talking?" Jacoby asked.

"I think he's going to," McEachern said. His eyes had moved toward Jacoby once, quickly, when he came in. Now they were centered only on the window. The men seated on the other side, Cheyney smoking, relaxed, Paladin tense but trying to control it, looked slightly yellowish through the one-way glass. The sound of their voices was clear and undistorted through the overhead speakers — a top-of-the-line Bose in each corner.

Without taking his eyes off the men, McEachern said: "You get his lawyer?"

Jacoby said: "The home number on the card belongs to a cleaning woman named Howlanda Moore."

McEachern flicked him another fast glance.

"Black, from the sound, delta Mississippi at a guess. Kids yelling and fighting in the background. She didn't quite say *I'se gwine whup you if you don't quit!*, but it was close. She's had the number three years. I re-dialed twice."

"Jesus," McEachern said. "Try the office number?"

"Yeah," Jacoby replied. "Got a recording. You think Contel's a good buy, Loot?"

McEachern flicked his gray eyes in Jacoby's direction again.

"The number on the front of the card is that of a fairly large stock brokerage," Jacoby said quietly. "I looked under lawyers in the Yellow Pages. Found no Albert K. Dellums. Closest is Albert Dillon, no middle initial. No law firm like the one on the card."

"Jesus please us," McEachern said, and then the door banged open and a little man with the face of a monkey barged in. The mayor had apparently won the race to Burbank.

"What's going on here?" he said to McEachern.

"I don't know," McEachern said.

* * *

"All right," Paladin said wearily. "Let's talk about it. I feel, Detective Cheyney, like a man who had just spent two hours or so on some disorientating amusement park ride. Or like someone slipped some LSD into my drink. Since we're not on the record, what was your one interrogatory? Let's start with that."

"All right," Cheyney said. "How did you get into the broadcast complex, and how did you get into Studio C?"

"Those are two questions."

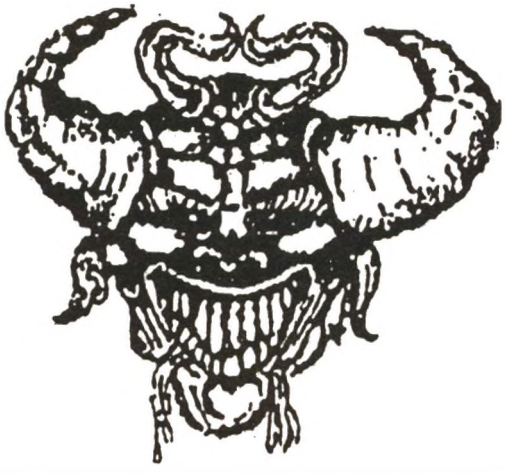
"I apoligize."

Paladin smiled faintly.

". . . the door banged open and a little man with the face of a monkey barged in . . ."

DICE WITH DEVIL!

COMPREHENSIVE MAIL ORDER CATALOGUE NOW AVAILABLE! 24 HR ANSAPHONE 7 DAYS A WEEK.



BOURNEMOUTH'S NEWEST GAMES SHOP : RT 9 STAFFORD RD. BOURNEMOUTH DORSET BH1 1JH TEL (0202) 27850

PANDEMONIUM

"'Could you put a one-dollar bill from your wallet on the coffee table there?' he asked softly."

"I got on the property and into the studio," he said, "the same way I've been getting on the property and into the studio for over twenty years. My pass. Plus the fact that I know every security guard in the place. Shit, I've been there longer than most of them."

"May I see that pass?" Cheyney asked. His voice was quiet, but a large pulse beat in his throat.

Paladin looked at him warily for a moment, then pulled out the lizard-skin wallet again. After a moment of rifling, he tossed a perfectly correct NBC Performer's Pass onto the coffee table.

Correct, that was, in every way but one.

Cheyney crushed out his smoke, picked it up, and looked at it. The pass was laminated. In the corner was the NBC peacock, something only long-timers had on their cards. The face in the photo was the face of Edward Paladin. Height and weight were correct. No space for eye-colour, hair-colour, or age, of course; when you were dealing with ego. Walk softly, stranger, for here there by tygers.

The only problem with the pass was that it was salmon pink.

NBC Performer's Passes were bright red.

* * *

Cheyney had seen something else while Paladin was looking for his pass. "Could you put a one-dollar bill from your wallet on the coffee table there?" he asked softly.

"Why?"

"I'll show you in a moment," Cheyney said. "A five or a ten would do as well."

Paladin studied him, then opened his wallet again. He took back his pass, replaced it, and carefully took out a one-dollar bill. He turned it so it faced Cheyney. Cheyney took his own wallet (a scuffed old Lord Buxton with its seams unravelling; he should replace it but found it easier to think of than to do) from his jacket pocket, and removed a dollar bill of his own. He put it next to Paladin's, and then turned them both around so Paladin could see them right-side up — so Paladin could study them.

Which Paladin did, silently, for almost a full minute. His face slowly flushed dark red . . . and then the colour slipped from it a little at a time. He'd probably meant to bellow WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE?, Cheyney thought later, but what came out was a breathless gasp' "— what —"

"I don't know," Cheyney said.

On the right was Cheyney's one, gray-green, not brand-new by any means, but new enough so that it did not yet have that rumpled, limp, shopworn look of a bill which has changed hands many times. Big number 1's at the top corners, smaller 1's at the bottom corners. FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE in small caps between the top 1's and THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA in larger one. The letter A in a seal to the left of Washington, along with the assurance that THIS NOTE IS LEGAL TENDER, FOR ALL DEBTS, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE. It was a series 1985 bill, the signature that of James A. Baker III.

Paladin's was not the same at all.

The 1's in the four corners were the same; THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA was the same; the assurance that the bill could be used to pay all public and private debts was the same.

But Paladin's one was bright blue.

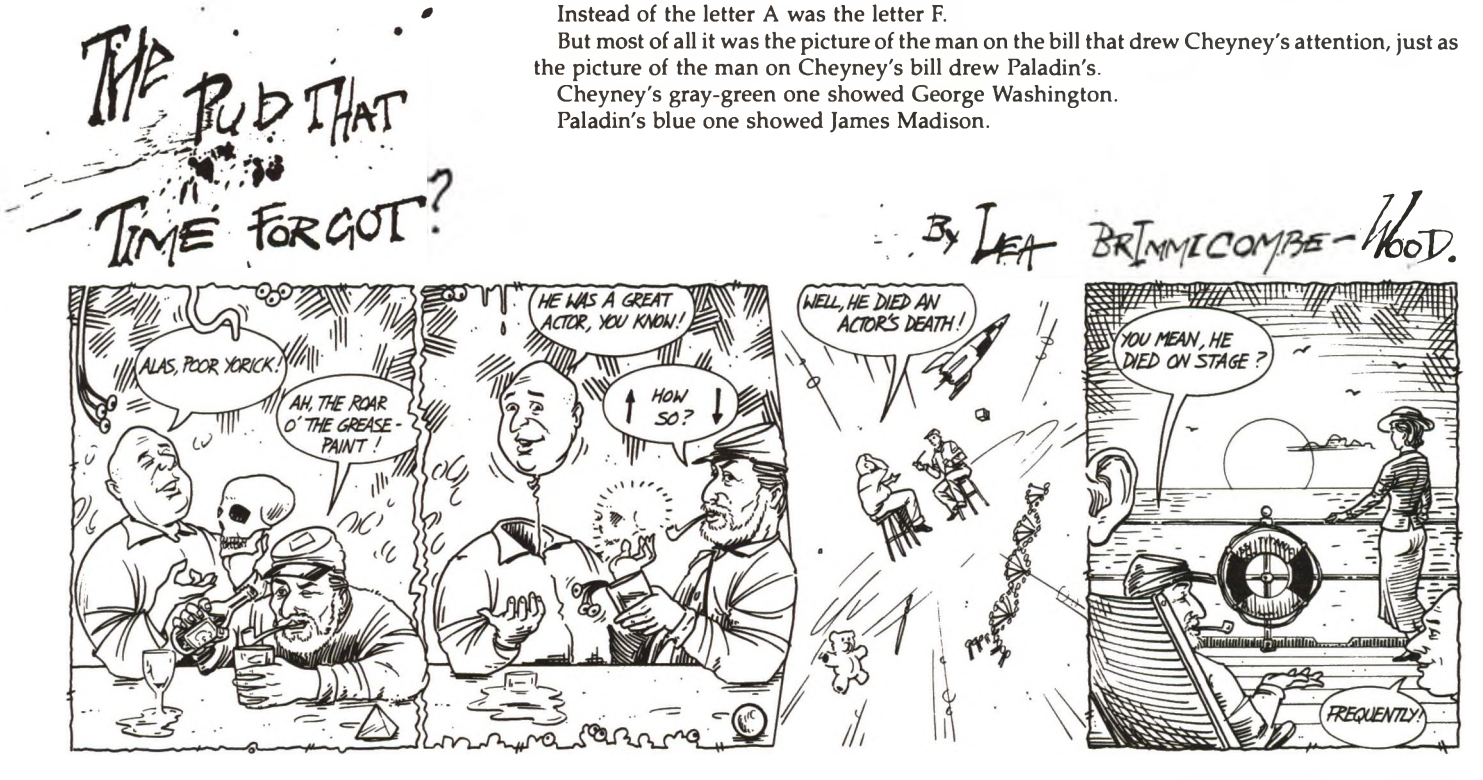
Instead of FEDERAL RESERVE NOTE it said CURRENCY OF GOVERNMENT.

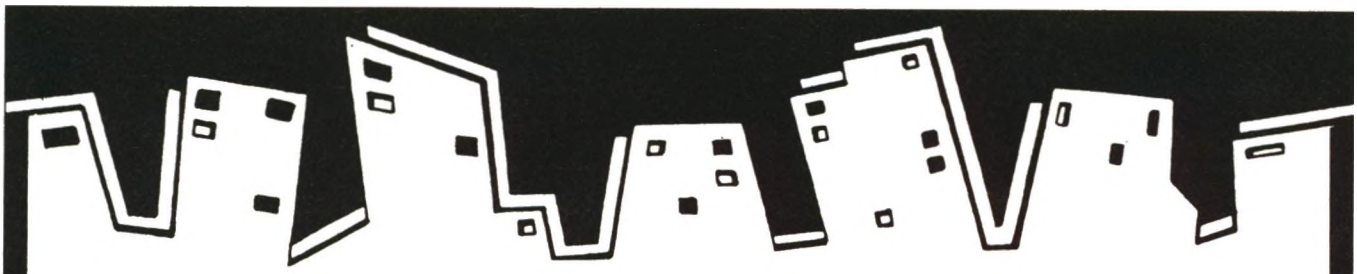
Instead of the letter A was the letter F.

But most of all it was the picture of the man on the bill that drew Cheyney's attention, just as the picture of the man on Cheyney's bill drew Paladin's.

Cheyney's gray-green one showed George Washington.

Paladin's blue one showed James Madison.


THE BUD THAT TIME FORGOT?
By LEA BRIMMICOMBE-WOOD.
ALAS, POOR YORICK!
AH, THE ROAR O' THE GREASE-PAINT!
HE WAS A GREAT ACTOR, YOU KNOW!
HOW SO?
WELL, HE DIED AN ACTOR'S DEATH!
YOU MEAN, HE DIED ON STAGE?
FREQUENTLY!



MEGA CITY

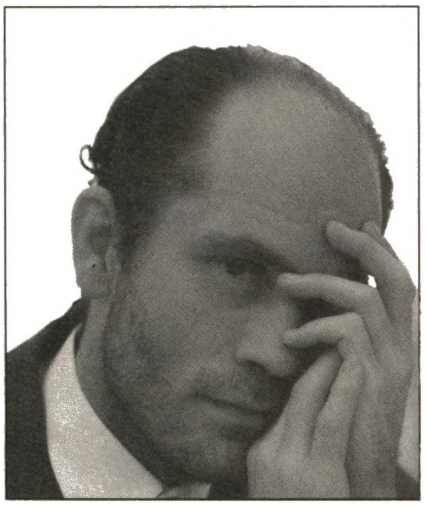
AMERICAN COMICS
JUDGE DREDD
2000 A.D.
VIZ, FREAK BROTHERS,
TINTIN, ASTERIX,
GRAPHIC NOVELS
T-SHIRTS
BADGES & POSTERS
OVER 100,000 BACK ISSUES
POSTCARDS & PRINTS
SF, HORROR, FILM & TV

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK
10 AM - 6 PM
MAIL-ORDER SERVICE
(Send two second-class stamps for bumper catalogue)
'LONDON'S BEST BACK-ISSUE SELECTION'
London Evening Standard
'A LARGE, WELL-DESIGNED, WELL-STOCKED SHOP'
Heartbreak Hotel

RATHER MORE THAN YOUR AVERAGE COMICS STORE

MEGA CITY, 18 INVERNESS STREET, CAMDEN TOWN, LONDON NW1 7HJ ☎ (01) 485 9320

HOW TO FIND US: Take the right-hand exit out of Camden Town tube. Turn right into the High Street. Cross the road and Inverness Street is the first turning on your left.



Philip Nutman, has covered horror fiction and film on both sides of the Atlantic for ten years. Here he talks to writer, director and now *actor*, David Cronenberg.

The Killing Note

Studio lights refract off the round, wire-rimmed glasses, but behind the lenses, another light shines; the light of a bright intellect flamed by a unique imagination. But today that imagination is not focussed on subjects such as mind/body dualism, psychic cancer or sexual parasites. David Cronenberg is thinking, not as a writer or director, but as an actor. He is about to don the face of his alter ego, 'The Mask' and erupt into psychopathic fury as he attempts to kill Lori (Anne Bobby), heroine of Clive Barker's NIGHTBREED.

"Are you ready, David?" Barker inquires beside the camera.

Cronenberg pauses before answering with a soft "yes". The pause is typical of the Canadian film maker, being the prelude to most responses. Unless, however, he is joking with co-star Charles Haid between takes and witty comments fly thick and fast.

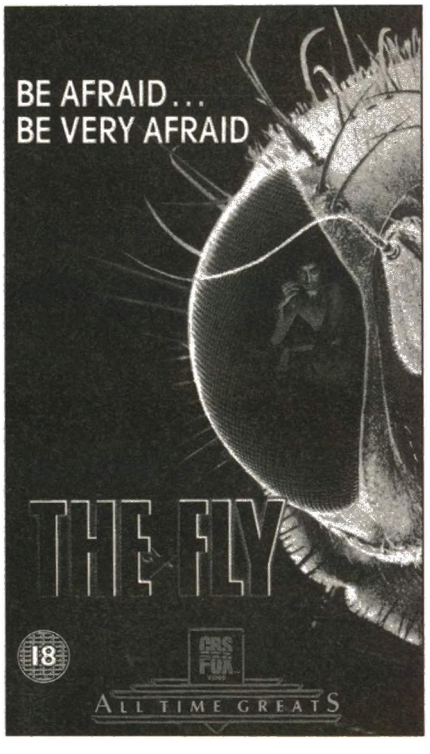
Then, in the twinkling of an eye, thought is replaced by action, the intense eyes covered by the mask as the esteemed director leaps out from behind a stone pillar, machete poised to bring sudden death as the cameras roll.

Casting Cronenberg as Philip Decker, the psychiatrist-antagonist of NIGHTBREED, was a bold move on Barker's part for this is no cameo — he has previously appeared in John Landis's INTO THE NIGHT and as the obstetrician who delivers Geena Davis' insect fetus in THE FLY — for he is on screen for much of the film's 99 minute running time. Indeed, Decker is the catalyst for the events in Barker's second picture as director.

Two takes later, Cronenberg sheds his psychopathic skin on this chill April day at Pinewood Studios. When a tea break is called he strolls over grinning, apparently happy to see me. We'd met the previous week, initially as part of a news item on the movie, and later at length to conduct an interview for an American publication. The formal ice long broken his first words are, "I'm going home tomorrow".

Home. It's a subject Cronenberg has brought up several times during our conversations and one gets the impression he does not enjoy straying too far from his Toronto roots. "I miss my family," he adds, "but tomorrow . . . "

THE FLY: Cronenberg's classic remake starring Jeff Goldblum and Geena Davis.



Yes, this *is* David Cronenberg speaking; the man who unleashed a plague of turd-like parasites upon unsuspecting audiences back in 1975, ripped apart the structure of the nuclear family in The Brood, transformed television into terrorvision with the controversial VIDEODROME and turned a 1950's monster movie — THE FLY — into a disturbing meditation on the fragility of our physical existance. But his days as 'the reigning king of schlock horror', the less than flattering epithet bestowed upon him by Canadian critics in the seventies, are long gone as anyone who saw DEAD RINGERS will testify. But now the man who coined the phrase 'The New Flesh' has donned another guise, that of performer.

"Doing this is rather strange," he admits over tea and cakes in his dressing room, situated only a few hundred yards from BATMAN's Gotham City set on the Pinewood backlot. "But it is liberating to express various emotional levels."

During an interview he gave with *Cinefantastique* magazine back in 1981, Cronenberg stated he felt horror is a genre of confrontation, amplifying, "I think of them as films that make you confront aspects of your own life that are difficult to face." Acting the part of a psychopathic murderer is a challenge for a performer since few if any have experienced the emotions aroused by violent death. Cronenberg, however, immediately sees where my question is leading. "Watching horror movies is definitely a cathartic experience. Acting in one — playing a psychopath — is something else. It's far more immediate, yet at the same time there is distance. True psychopathic feeling is obviously an experience totally alien to me. We've probably all entertained the idea of killing somebody at times in our lives, but that's as far as it goes. Acting this out is," he pauses, looks thoughtfully up at the ceiling for a beat, "tiring. But I don't see my experience as an actor a particularly cathartic one because I'm not an aggressive or violent person. But it has turned out to be an interesting learning experience.

"At first I thought I wouldn't learn a lot, but in fact I *am* learning — about myself *vis-*

a-vis film. It's certainly not going to influence my attitude towards actors because what I've learned you don't really need to know as a director, but there are many things you put yourself through that are very instructive. It's also from just seeing how I react as opposed to other actors whom I've seen under the same pressures. Unless you try it, you don't know.

"I came to this film with a desire to act, to approach filmmaking from a different perspective, to free my thoughts from their usual pattern. It's like a musician who always plays his instrument the same way with only slight variation; you get the desire to play the blues instead of classical guitar. I've found my directorial reflexes run deep. One day I was standing next to the camera, waiting for the next scene, standing in my usual director's position. I had to stop myself from calling action. I was very close," he admits, punctuating the anecdote with a soft chuckle.

In another interview, around the time of THE BROOD's release, Cronenberg was recorded as saying, "I think an artist is supposed to be extreme," in defense of the criticisms concerning the emetic quality of his visceral visions. Does he feel the same way as an actor, particularly in relation to Decker's psychosis?

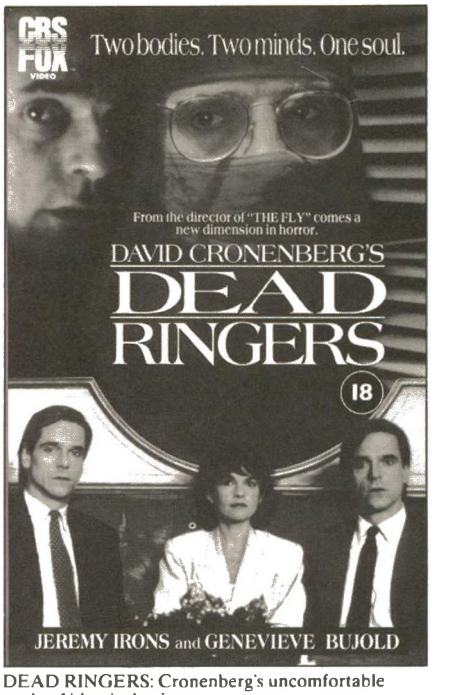
"No," he says as he sips his tea and losens his tie. "No, Decker is a study in control. Every move he makes is carefully measured, observed. He's continually watching himself."

With no formal training, a novice actor has two aspects to draw on, instinct and imagination. As a director, Cronenberg is known for frowning on improvised dialogue, prefering to carefully choreograph the dynamics of a scene with his performance prior to a take. What of his own preparation?

"Nothing, really. I'm not a method actor, although obviously one must develop one's own method. I have no idea how common or not this is, but I have to find the music, literally, in the phrases. I could almost write musical notations for my dialogue, and until I find that in a scene, my lines are dead. I have to shape it that way, and that comes from my ear rather than an inner understanding of my character. Whether or not this means the character doesn't work is another matter, but this is the way I've approached it. It's more, let's say, the English approach to acting than the American."

Observing Cronenberg on set one is immediately struck by his quiet manner. Is this, I wondered, the result of his listening for those musical notes, or, as he notes, watching himself in the way Decker watches his own actions? Cronenberg appears as a study in control both on and off screen.

"Controlled?" Again a long pause. "Yes, I guess my movements are that way. I hadn't been fully aware of that fact. Thank you for the observation. It comes from a subconscious understanding of Decker, I would assume, as he's a very controlled personality. He's constantly on edge because he doesn't want to reveal anything, so he's very conscious of himself, constantly watching every move he makes, which is highly schizophrenic."


CBS FOX VIDEO
Two bodies. Two minds. One soul.
From the director of "THE FLY" comes a new dimension in horror.
DAVID CRONENBERG'S
DEAD RINGERS
18
JEREMY IRONS and GENEVIEVE BUJOLD
DEAD RINGERS: Cronenberg's uncomfortable study of identical twins.

"I do think of myself as a medievalist . . ."

PHOTO: Murray Close

The schism between mind and body; the separation between characters and now the split between personalities. These are Cronenberg's recurring themes. At one stage in the filming, Charles Haid informed me he could see his Canadian co-star was split as an actor, that he was obviously viewing himself from the perspective of director and performer.

"Up to a point," he concurs. "It's important I know film technique. You can't come straight off the stage and be an adept cinema actor, since you wouldn't understand editing, eye line, all the technical stuff that makes film acting so different from the purity of performing on stage. I've seen some actors experience that problem. I said to Charlie, at one moment I started going dead on certain lines because I knew I was looking across the axis for the camera angle and therefore the material wouldn't be used in the editing. I know too much, that's my problem. I've had to pull myself in."

Both Barker and Cronenberg deal with similar themes — transformation, transcendence, physical horror — but from different perspectives. Decker, in many respects, is reminiscent of characters in Cronenberg's own films. "Correct, but he is Clive's character. What interests me most is not our thematic similarities, it's the difference between how he does things and how I would. I wouldn't create a character like this for one of my films because I'm not interested in serial killers. But Decker is similar to certain characters in my films, even if there are many differences that conflict. The main differences are the creation of occult systems. The supernatural is something I avoid. I tend towards science, medicine, completely rational subjects. Clive is very inventive, exuberant in creating characters of the age of miracles and primal emotion, whereas mine come primarily from the age of reason. Yet it's funny, because I do think of myself as a medievalist too."

What he says is true. Think of the operating room sequence in *Dead Ringers*, for example, and the deep red surgical gowns worn by Jeremy Irons and his assistants, a scene that recalls the Red Death character from Corman's classic version of the Poe story. The vividness of the gowns contrasts violently with the muted tones which predominate throughout the movie. The style echoes images of the Spanish Inquisition, which in turn is reflected in the black leather robes of HELLRAISER's Cenobites. Cronenberg laughs at the comparison. "True. I only saw HELLRAISER a few days ago, but much as I enjoyed it, I would never make that kind of film." He does, however, concede the aesthetic parallel.

". . . His days as 'the reigning king of shlock horror' . . . are long gone, as anyone who saw* Dead Ringers *will testify."

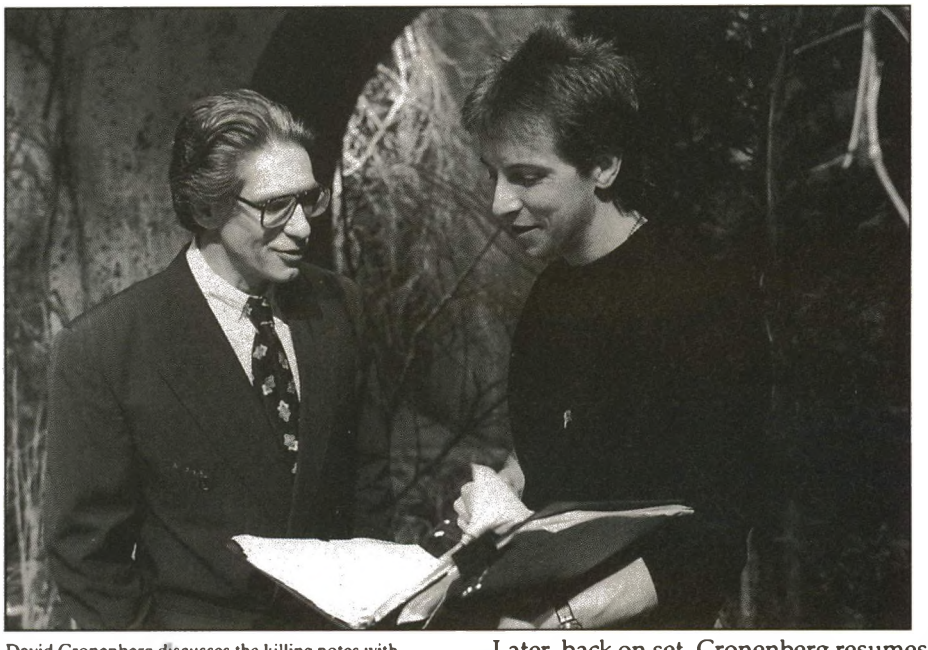


PHOTO: Murray Close

David Cronenberg discusses the killing notes with Clive Barker.

As for the future, he hopes finally to film THE NAKED LUNCH — from the Beat Generation novel by William Burroughs — sometime later this year. It's a project his name has been associated with for a few years and the news was initially greeted with surprise: Cronenberg does Burroughs?

"I've been working on the script again while I've been here, but I can't definitely say it will be the next project I tackle as a director, since deals have yet to be made," he reveals. "Jeremy Thomas (producer of THE LAST EMPEROR) and I are as enthusiastic about it as ever. It's a project that's reached its time. We've been discussing it for seven years now, and although there are a couple of other projects I want to do, this one's commanding the most attention right now."

Later, back on set, Cronenberg resumes his attack on Lori and the ruins of Midian echo to the sound of screams and machete on stone as he goes through his paces. Wearing the chain mask is clearly uncomfortable, and by the end of several set-ups he looks tired. Between camera positions, the actor is silent, head tilted at an angle as if listening for something only he can hear. At one point he turns, smiling. "This is . . . different. It's kind of liberating to express another emotional level." And obviously energy consuming.

With that he drifts back to the camera. On goes the mask. Cronenberg tilts his head as if searching for the right note for what will follow.

Action.

Anne Bobby screams.

For Decker it is the killing note. For David Cronenberg, actor, it is the signal to express an alien emotion.

Q: What do the following authors & artists have in common?

Douglas Adams Brian Aldiss Isaac Asimov
Iain Banks Clive Barker David Brin John Brosnan Jim Burns Ramsey Campbell
Angela Carter Joy Chant Simon Ian Childers Adrian Cole Edmund Cooper Louise Cooper
Richard Cowper Roger Dean Terrance Dicks Thomas M Disch Stephen Donaldson Harlan
Ellison Chris Foss David Gemmell David Gerrold William Gibson Charles L Grant
Harry Harrison Frank Herbert James Herbert Philip E High Robert Holdstock Shaun Hutson
Diana Wynne Jones Jeff Jones Peter Jones Mike Kaluta Colin Kapp Leigh Kennedy
Bernard King Nigel Kneale Harry Adam Knight Katherine Kurtz David Langford
Stephen Lawhead Anne McCaffrey Ian Marter Rodney Matthews Michael Moorcock
Chris Morgan Larry Niven Frederik Pohl Jerry Pournelle Terry Pratchett
Christopher Priest Robert Rankin Kim Stanley Robinson Michael Scott Rohan
Geoff Ryman Josephine Saxton Bob Shaw Robert Silverberg Brian Stableford
Theodore Sturgeon Patrick Tilley EC Tubb Lisa Tuttle Freda Warrington Ian Watson
Tim White David Wingrove Gene Wolfe Patrick Woodroffe Berni Wrightson Jonathan Wylie

SPECIALISTS IN SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY & SUPERNATURAL FICTION

ANDROMEDA BOOKSHOP

84 SUFFOLK STREET · BIRMINGHAM B1 1TA · ENGLAND · Tel: 021-643 1999

Established 1971 - UK's oldest SF specialist shop

Run by enthusiasts who know SF

Largest selection of SF and Fantasy in the UK — over 3000 titles in stock

All the latest hardcovers, paperbacks and magazines as issued

Second-hand selection, including rare, out-of-print items

Video tapes in stock - all new (no ex-library copies!)

Fast, efficient mail - order service

Bi-monthly, detailed catalogues of new titles - free!

Customers in over 30 countries worldwide

Standing order service for regular publications

We Take
ACCESS, AMERICAN EXPRESS, VISA/BARCLAYCARD & DINERS

MEET DAVID BRIN ON SAT 16TH JUNE AT 11.00 AM

A: They've all had signing sessions with ANDROMEDA!

OUTER LIMITS

GAMES WORKSHOP - TSR - GURPS - BATTLETEC - RUNEQUEST - AVALON HILL - COLUMBIA GAMES - VICTORY GAMES - FASA - CAR WARS - COMICS - SPACE - SCIFI - HORROR - GORE - POSTERS - BADGES - MODELS - KITS - T SHIRTS - POST CARDS - JEWELLERY - AND MUCH MORE -

SEND FOR FREE MAIL ORDER CATALOGUE (30+ PAGES) - 24HR ANSAPHONE SERVICE - ACCESS/VISA/CONNECT ACCEPTED.

4 THE BROADWAY BEDFORD MK40 2TH – TEL. (0234) 58581

THE MOVIE STORE

AN ALADDIN'S CAVE OF FILM & TV MEMORABILIA

From the silent movies to the blockbusters of today, science fiction, comedy, horror, fantasy, drama, westerns and thrillers.

Specialist subjects include:- BATMAN, STAR TREK, MARILYN MONROE, SHERLOCK HOLMES, CHARLIE CHAPLIN, DOCTOR WHO, JOHN WAYNE, ALIENS, JAMES BOND, FREDDY KRUEGER, WALT DISNEY, LOONEY TUNES, LAUREL & HARDY, INDIANA JONES and many more stars, heroes and superheroes.

Our massive range of merchandise includes:- POSTERS, POSTCARDS, GREETING CARDS, BOOKS, MAGAZINES, FANZINES, GRAPHIC NOVELS, FILM-RELATED COMICS, PRINTS, LPS, CASSETTES & CDS, T-SHIRTS, MINIATURES, GAMES, TOYS, FIGURES, KITS, COLLECTABLES, NOVEL ITEMS, ART FOLIOS, PHOTOS, GIFTS, LIMITED EDITIONS.

Plus a comprehensive range of videos inc:- DOCTOR WHO, MYTHMAKERS, HOLMES, CLASSIC FILMS, COLLECTIONS, ANDERSON, SILENTS, STAR TREK, VINTAGE TV EPISODES, SCIENCE FICTION, HORROR AND FANTASY TITLES, ANIMATION & DISNEY AND HUNDREDS MORE.
ALL THIS AND MORE AT THE MOVIE STORE

Send a large S.A.E. for our comprehensive bi-monthly catalogue and news magazine.

Our shop is open 6 days a week Mon-Sat 9.30am-7.00pm

(Access, Mastercard, Eurocard, NW Visa & Barclaycard are welcome)
Telephone credit card orders accepted Mon-Sat 9.30am-7.00pm

THE MOVIE STORE, 7 HIGH STREET, TWYFORD, BERKSHIRE RG10 9AB. TEL: TWYFORD (0734) 342098

THE SHEFFIELD SPACE CENTRE

S/F BOOKS
·COMICS·
FILM/T.V.

We Stock...

STAR TREK

Next Gen Plates, Mugs
Costume Patterns
Pins and Patches
Books /Audio Books
Blueprints
Technical Manuals
Models and Toys
Magazines and Comics
Official Fan Club Mags

PLUS...

Science Fiction and Fantasy Books
Roleplaying Games
Comics
Soundtracks and Videos
T-Shirts Posters etc.

Items available in the shop or through the post. Send SAE for list.

We are closed ALL DAY Wednesday.

33 THE WICKER, SHEFFIELD S3 8HS, TEL: (0742) 758905

Mega-Signing!

The publishers of

SKELETON CREW

are pleased to announce a signing by Issue Two contributors including

SHAUN HUTSON
JOHN BOLTON
BRIAN BLESSED
JOHN HURT
NICHOLAS VINCE
DAVE McKEAN
(subject to availability)

plus guests

at Mega-City Comics, 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ on Sunday 22 July 1990 at midday

in association with MEGA-CITY COMICS

NECROFILE

In the first of our regular looks at fan events, publications and organisations, *Skeleton Crew* takes a closer look at the *Black Sunday* horror film festival.

BLACK SUNDAY

Black Sunday, the bi-annual movie convention, is *the* horror film festival, combining premiere screenings and cult films with guests, a great venue and a lot of enthusiasm. The most recent of these events was held mid-January of this year, where eight new movies (including such recent classics as SOCIETY, I BOUGHT A VAMPIRE MOTORCYCLE and MONKEY SHINES) were shown from midnight on Saturday to Sunday evening. The venue, the Metro Cinema in Ashby-under-Lyne, Manchester, was ideal, seating the 700+ visitors in comfort, despite the twenty gruelling hours that most of them remained seated!

The organisers, Malcolm Daglish and David Bryan, started out with a modest idea for a Northern equivalent to the annual *Shock Around The Clock* horror film festival held every Summer at the Scala Cinema in London. Malcolm and David have now quit their jobs and have formed Minotaur Film Promotions, a movie public relations company which plans to push horror movies on every level. Assisted by good reviews of the events themselves *and* of the movies they choose to show, the future looks bright for the two Mancunians.

Previous guest lists have included various horror film directors and producers, plus literary names such as Stephen Gallagher, Shaun Hutson and Ramsey Campbell but, although the panel discussion organised at the 1989 event went well, the guests tend to be far more informal, mingling with the crowd, enjoying the movies and signing the odd book or video.

The next *Black Sunday* is set to take place on 24/25 June 1990. It already boasts an impressive guest list and a strong movie lineup: despite its close proximity this time to *Shock Around The Clock* (rendering some movies unavailable to the dynamic duo), such movies as BASKET CASE 2, BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR, FRANKENHOOKER and LEATHERFACE (TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE III) are already on the list. The admission fee is around £17.50 (approximately £2 per film), with reductions for students and OAPs (oh yeah!). With *Shock Around The Clock* yet to be organised, and the ill-fated *Splatterfest* fiasco unlikely to be repeated, *Black Sunday* looks to be the safe bet for an early booking.

Information (and, eventually, tickets) can be had from Malcolm or David, care of *Black Sunday*, 51 Thatch Leach Lane, Whitefield, Manchester M25 6EN. Their busy 'phone number is (061) 766 2566. Keep trying!

PHOTO: Seamus A Ryan

Left to right: HELLRAISER II scriptwriter Peter Atkins, David Bryan, NEKROMANTIK director Jorg Buttgereit and I BOUGHT A VAMPIRE MOTORCYCLE writer/producer Simon Joseph.

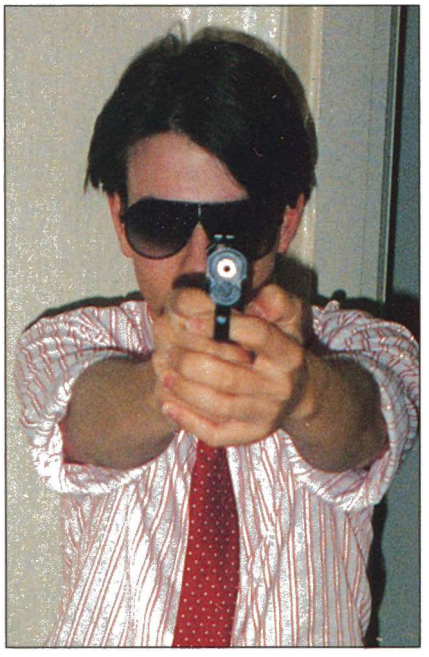


PHOTO: Dave Hughes

Matthew Pook has written for *Starburst, GM, Video Today* and his local Bournemouth newspaper. He is also the editor's flatmate, but both deny nepotism.

A Sprinkle of Dream Dust

Neil Gaiman cannot be called "just a comic writer." Although his book GHASTLY BEYOND BELIEF (with Kim Newman) lead him to begin writing for such modern magazines as PENTHOUSE, KNAVE, TIME OUT, YOU and the TODAY newspaper, it was not until 1986, when he met Alan Moore "holding up a bar" and learned how a comic strip was laid out, that he began to suspect that he was able to write class comics as well as class fiction. His first work — aside from the usual Future Shock stories in 2000AD — was VIOLENT CASES, a critically well-received graphic novella painted by Dave McKean. After another SF book, this time a semi-biographical account of Douglas Adams' THE HITCH-HIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY, Gaiman and McKean were approached by DC Comics to resurrect minor DC character BLACK ORCHID for a new, three-issue prestige-format series. BLACK ORCHID was a huge hit, resulting in the offer, again from DC, to write an ongoing series, THE SANDMAN, once again resurrecting an early DC character. Alan Moore described Neil's rendering of the comic as "bizarre and fascinating", Ramsey Campbell called it "Witty, disturbing; unpredictable as a dream", while Mary Gentle used the words "amoral, immoral; agent of cosmic necessities". All these descriptions apply equally to THE SANDMAN comic and to Neil himself (although perhaps the word 'comic' should be substituted for 'cosmic' in Ms Gentle's statement), but — for this issue at least — I shall be looking at the character and the comic. Bear with me.

The idea behind the Sandman character may be unfamiliar to British readers, although it is principally derived from British and European folklore. Traditionally, each night as a child falls asleep, the Sandman would sprinkle some of his dream dust upon the eyes of the sleeping child, whenceforth he or she would be able to dream. George Clayton and William F Nolan used a derivation of the figure in their 1967 novel, LOGAN'S RUN; the 'deep sleep men' who execute those that manage to escape the involuntary euthanasia order beyond their twenty-first birthdays are nicknamed 'sandmen'. Indeed, a close look at the DC Comics background reveals that Gaiman's Sandman is, in fact, the *fourth* comic incarnation of this enigmatic character, although the Sandman's early appearances reflected in style and execution the typical 'four-colour' comic. The original DC Sandman was 'wealthy socialite' Wesley Dodds, a crime-fighter who put his criminal foes to sleep with a gas gun and sprinkled them with sand as a personal trademark. After his first appearance in ADVENTURE COMICS #40, this early Sandman was a founding member of the Justice Society of America, with whom he now fights an eternal battle in the dimension of Asgard in an ongoing attempt to save the universe from destruction. The Sandman's next incarnation was Dr Garrett Sanford, a dream research scientist trapped forever in the Dream Dimension. Borrowing his identity (but not his costume or his methods) from the Sandman character from the 1940s, Garrett struggled to prevent creatures from the Dimension from entering the nightmares of innocent people. Garrett was the first Sandman to feature in his own title (THE SANDMAN). The third appearance of The Sandman was in INFINITY, INC #49, in which the Silver Scarab visits the Dream Dimension and finds that the strain of living in the nightmare world has killed Dr Garrett's soul, rendering his body lifeless and trapped on Earth. The Silver Scarab (aka Hector Sanders Hall) inhabits Garrett's old body and becomes the new Sandman, unfortunately only able to visit the 'real' world for one hour in twenty-four. Hall still inhabits the Dream Dimension with his wife and child.

"Our sympathy is invoked as Destiny becomes a figure of pitiful tragedy . . ."

Our first encounter with the fourth and latest incarnation of the Sandman is in England, in 1916. Roderick Burgess, bitter rival of occultist Aleister Crowley, the self-styled 'daemon king', dreams of Death, whom he desires to summon and bind in order to prove to the world who weilds ultimate power. But the figure brought forth in Burgess' bizarre ceremony is clothed in a large cloak and helm and clutches a pouch of sand and a ruby 'dreamstone': it is not Death! Stripped of his clothing and posses-

sions, the figure is tall and gaunt, with wild black-blue hair, white skin and blazing eyes. The figure, who is christened the 'kinge of dremes', is not prepared to bargain with his captor, who craves power, immortality and a promise that revenge will not be sought upon the mysterious figure's release. The 'kinge of dremes' prefers to sit and bide his time, waiting for the right moment to free himself.

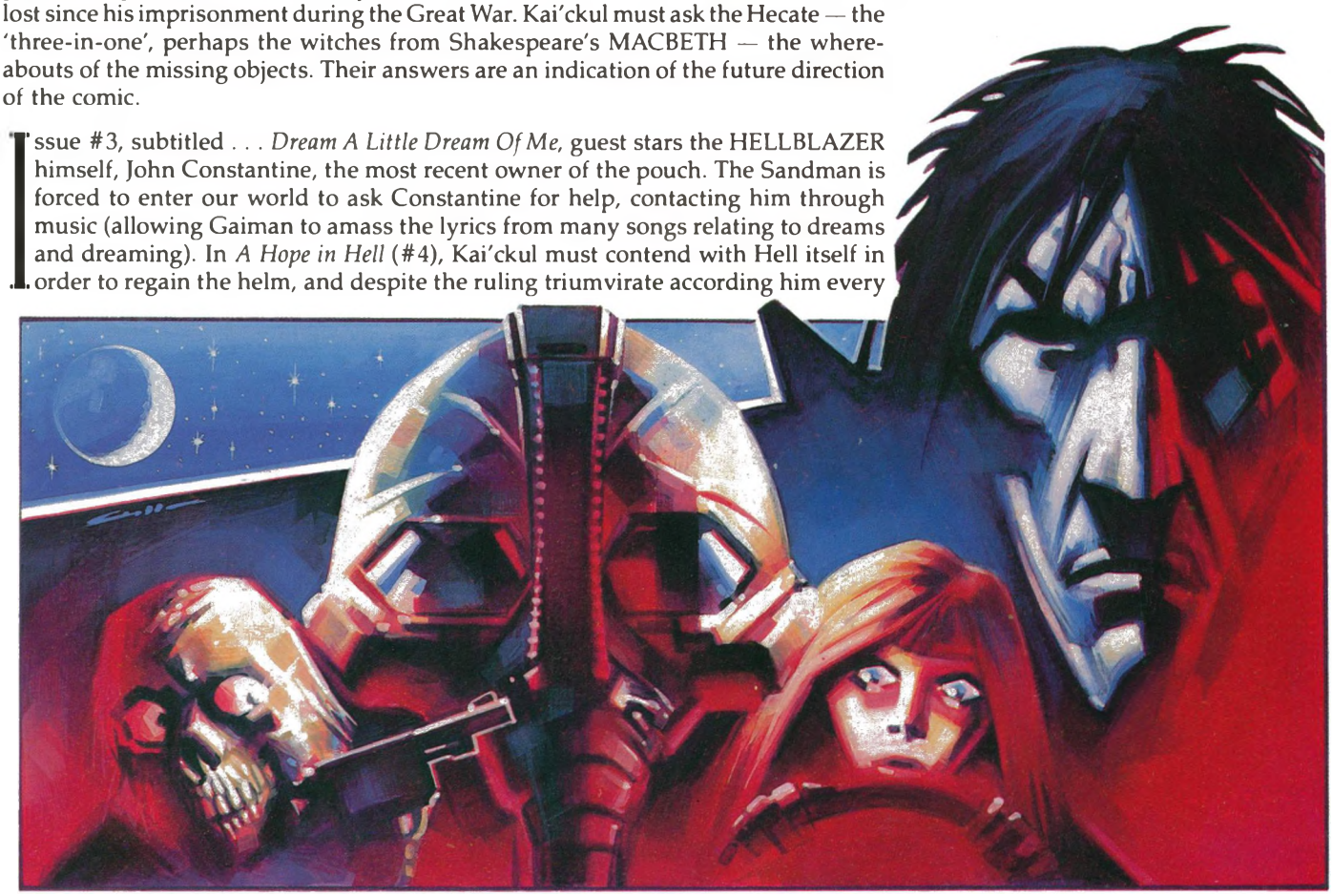
However, with the imprisonment of the dream-king, the balance of the universe is upset. A strange malady sweeps the world after 1916: some simply fall asleep, waking perhaps four or five times a year, or not at all; others have nightmares which escape to plague their waking hours so that they dare not sleep; others spend their lives like zombies, since the removal of their dreams makes them frightened to sleep. The 'sleepy sickness' will later be diagnosed as 'encephalitus lethargica' and will cost many lives. Burgess' son Alex — to whom the task for holding the dream-king falls upon his father's death — orders the guards watching the captive not to fall asleep, since this will allow it to feed and break his imprisoning circle. However, the Sandman escapes and, although weakened by his long internment, exacts his revenge upon the Burgess family.

All this (from THE SANDMAN: MASTER OF DREAMS #1) acts as a prologue to the ensuring stories, and sets the style and format of the series. Each is in DC's full-colour format, with interior art by Mike Dringenberg (with Sam Kieth and, later, Malcolm Jones III, Chris Bachalo, Michael Zulli and Steve Parkhouse) and ethereal covers by Dave McKean. The interior art gives the feel that Sandman has been displaced from his own time (indeed, he was imprisoned from 1916 to 1988), and the gloomy colours (mostly supplied by Robbie Busch) very much reflect the fact that the Sandman is an Edwardian character set adrift on modern-day Earth. The story progresses from *The Sleep of the Just* (THE SANDMAN: MASTER OF DREAMS #1) to *Imperfect Hosts* (#2), in which the exhausted Sandman meets the cruel and sadistic 'Cain' and his insecure and much put-upon younger brother, 'Abel' at their 'House of Mystery' — characters originally portrayed in the DC Comics HOUSE OF MYSTERY and HOUSE OF SECRETS. Describing themselves as characters from the "first story" (an obvious Bible reference), they explain Sandman's misplaced background to him, also imparting some of his other names: Master of Dreams, prince Morpheus, Prince of Stories, Dreamkin, the Oneiromancer, Dreamlord, Kai'ckul. Once rested, he returns to the Dream Dimension, leaving the two brothers to squabble into eternity. The Sandman's power diminished, he embarks on a search for his accoutrements of power: the pouch of sand, the ruby dreamstone and the helm, all of which have been lost since his imprisonment during the Great War. Kai'ckul must ask the Hecate — the 'three-in-one', perhaps the witches from Shakespeare's MACBETH — the whereabouts of the missing objects. Their answers are an indication of the future direction of the comic.

Artwork © 1989 DC Comics Inc.

". . . with imprisonment of the dream-king, the balance of the universe is upset."

Issue #3, subtitled . . . *Dream A Little Dream Of Me*, guest stars the HELLBLAZER himself, John Constantine, the most recent owner of the pouch. The Sandman is forced to enter our world to ask Constantine for help, contacting him through music (allowing Gaiman to amass the lyrics from many songs relating to dreams and dreaming). In *A Hope in Hell* (#4), Kai'ckul must contend with Hell itself in order to regain the helm, and despite the ruling triumvirate according him every



Main illustration by Kevin Cullen

THE LARGEST OF SILVER AGE IN THE ARE TO BE A BRAND

OPENING

125 East Barnet

(Cockfosters/High Barnet

081-

ANSWERING MACHINE

Plus all the latest imports and graphic novels and goodies which World Wide Mail order service

Place your order for our

NO-ONE TRIES HARDER TO KEEP IN-DEMAND

SELECTION AND GOLDEN COMICS UK ARE FOUND IN NEW SHOP

SOON!

Road London EN4 8RW

tube, New Barnet British Rail)

449 5535 (10 lines)

SERVICE 24 hours a day!

recent/SILVER/GOLD back issues (100,000)
makes STATESIDE COMICS PLC the best!
and valuations always available
regular catalogue and newsletter

AND KEY COMICS IN CONSTANT STOCK

". . . we discover that Kai'ckul is not the only one seeking the . . . dreamkin's raiments of power . . ."

courtesy they become adversaries, trying to bring his power over dreams under their own control, or destroying it for ever. And in *Passengers* (#5) we discover that Kai'ckul is not the only one seeking the third (and most powerful) of the dreamkin's raiments of power: Doctor Destiny, an old foe of the Justice League of America, currently interned in Arkham Asylum, depended on the 'stone to dream. An insane shadow of his former self, Doctor Destiny intends to use the dreamstone to inflict his mad dreams on the world. We become the passengers of the title as he hitches a ride to the dreamstone with Rosemary as driver, and through her we begin to see Destiny as far more than an ordinary criminal madman. Our sympathy is invoked as Destiny becomes a figure of pitiful tragedy, committing insane atrocities to further his own ends. These are heralded ominously by Gaiman's own words at the end of the *Passengers* story: "Not for children. Not for the easily disturbed. Honest." In Issue #6 (*24 Hours*), Destiny sits observing and learning about customers in a 24-hour diner. He has the ruby, the Sandman is out for the count, and, over the course of a single day, Destiny subjects them to a series of experiments in the perverse. Gaiman establishes the cast of characters and then, through Destiny's will, takes them apart one by one, revealing their innermost secrets and sexual desires. Gaiman does not shy away from such 'mature readers' subjects as sadism, adultery, masochism and necrophilia, but he does not include them for shock value. The sadness of these scenes is amplified by the reader's knowledge that the diner is a tiny microcosm of the suffering going on in

the rest of the world under the influence of the ruby. The battle for supremacy of the dream world begins between Doctor Destiny and Morpheus, with the former initially having the upper hand since he uses the now-flawed dreamstone. Morpheus prevails, however, his adversary thwarted by the flawed 'stone, and Doctor Destiny returns as the mad but sorry John Dee to his rightful home: Arkham Asylum (he will later turn up again in Grant Morrison and Dave McKean's book of the same name).

Having defeated the mad doctor, Morpheus is almost back to his former self. Before the story moves into top gear, however, Gaiman teaches us more of Morpheus' past, describing him as one of the "endless" — beings more powerful than gods, since without followers a god will die, while the endless carry on eternally. They have no origin for they have always been, and no ending for they always will be. Morpheus is Dream: brother of twins Despair and Desire and also of Death. They transcend races and cultures: to the Western world Dream is the Sandman, to the ancient Greeks he is Morpheus, God of Dreams, and to J'onn J'onnz, last of the Martians, he is Lord L'zoril.

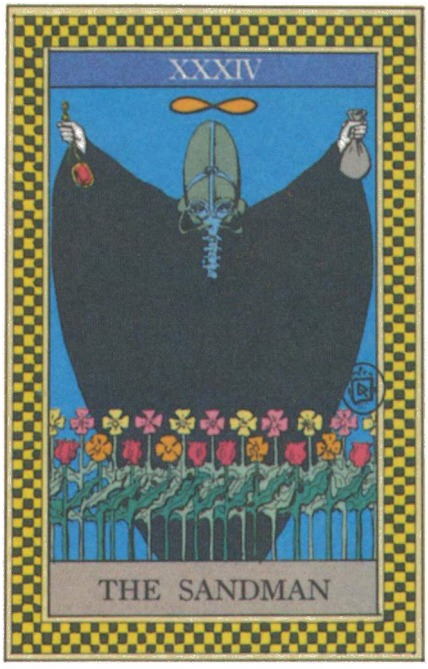
Artwork © 1989 DC Comics Inc.

Whoever he is, his agelessness does not alienate him to human values, although his imprisonment causes him to exhibit them rather erratically: for example, rather than punish Doctor Destiny for his crimes, Morpheus returns him to his cell and gives him the gift of sleep. As a reward to Constantine, Morpheus agrees to ease the troubled soul's nightmares. Yet his errant servants, Glob and Brute, are to be punished for more than a thousand years, while their creation — the 'third' Sandman — is vanquished, his wife left to pick up the pieces of her life and start afresh: there is no compassion to be found here.

From here on, the Sandman attempts to regain his purpose, lost during his weakening imprisonment. It is his sister, Death, a young neo-punk, who shows him where his responsibilities lie, and it is she who carries him into *The Doll's House*. This story, beginning in Issue #10, spans several issues, in which Morpheus must restore several factors within his own kingdom and, after a textual recap in #9, this is what he sets out to do in *The Doll's House*. This story is much stronger and more concise, since it has a detailed background to draw upon (created in the series' early issues). The story is unfinished at the time of writing, but it shows much promise.

THE SANDMAN: MASTER OF DREAMS in its present form is an unsettling blend of high fantasy, contemporary horror and magical realism. Neil Gaiman has shown that his track record — VIOLENT CASES, GHASTLY BEYOND BELIEF, DON'T PANIC, BLACK ORCHID, HELLBLAZER (a one-off guest team-up with Dave McKean called *Hold Me*) and GOOD OMENS (the novel he wrote with Terry Pratchett) — can still be enhanced. His future projects, including an eighteen-issue series of MIRACLEMAN for Eclipse Comics and THE BOOK OF MAGIC with John Bolton, show that comics are very much his medium of expression, and humour and horror his modus operandi (see the introduction to this very issue if you don't believe me!). As Steve Bissette, ex-SWAMP THING artist and editor of the horror comic anthology TABOO, has said: "THE SANDMAN is the latest and most playful entry in DC Comics' horror trilogy (SWAMP THING and HELLBLAZER honourably precede it)". Winner of no fewer than three SPEAKEASY awards (including Best Single Issue for SANDMAN: MASTER OF DREAMS #8), the title is certain to run for years to come, proving Neil Gaiman's incarnation greater even than the Golden Age Sandman character. Back issues can still be found almost everywhere (dreamland is always a disconcertingly easy place to visit), and DC and Titan Books have recently collaborated on a full-colour collection of *The Doll's House* story (issues #8 to #16), with, Neil says, "a new Dave McKean cover, a lengthy Clive Barker introduction, and some colouring and lettering goofs fixed!" But remember . . .

. . . It is never "only a dream" . . .



Artwork © 1989 DC Comics Inc.

". . . the title is certain to run for years to come, proving Neil Gaiman's incarnation greater even than the Golden Age Sandman . . ."

THE SANDMEN: Left to right, I, II, III, IV and IV's sister, Death.

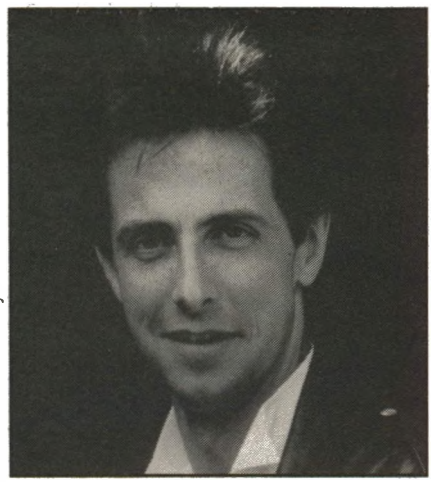


PHOTO: Seamus A Ryan

NIGHT GALLERY

Clive Barker needs no introduction as a writer, but there are still some lost souls as yet unfamiliar with his artwork. Here we use our regular portfolio feature to showcase some of Barker's art from his forthcoming book *Clive Barker, Illustrator.*

With thanks to Clive Barker, Mark Cox and Eclipse

© 1990 Clive Barker.

ALCHEMY

ORIGINAL DESIGNS, HAND MADE IN ENGLAND BY ALCHEMY CARTA. HIGHLY POLISHED SOLID PEWTER PENDANTS ON 18" CHAINS AND EARRINGS ON SURGICAL STEEL WIRES.
IF IT'S NOT IN AN ALCHEMY BLUE LABEL PACKET – IT'S NOT ALCHEMY!

DRAGON SLAVE
A2 BANGLE
£12.99

ALCHEMY metal-wear®

THE ALCHEMIST ANIMA SKULL
LIFESIZE, RESIN, SIMULATED BONE
ALCHEMISTS SKULL, WITH GOLD PLATED
CUSPID TOOTH AND BLACK SILK LIKE ROSE
ASS.1 £34.99

TORDRAGON
R.106 BRONZE RING
£6.99

SEER CRYSTAL
WITH AUSTRIAN
CRYSTAL ORB
R.15p RING
£6.99

RINGS: PLEASE STATE SIZE:
XS(N), S(O), M(T).
L(W), XL(Y).

RAMSKUL
P.14 PENDANT £4.99

PENDRAGON
P.44
PENDANT
£5.99
E.44
EARRING
£5.99

SUCCUBUS
P.85 PENDANT
£6.50
E.85 EARRING
£6.50

GORGON – WITH
BRONZE SKULL
P.80b PENDANT £7.99

CHAOS
RUNESWORD
P.2 PENDANT
£4.99
E.2 EARRING
£4.99

DARK STAR
P.82 PENDANT
£3.75
E.82 EARRING
£3.75

NIGHTWING
P.34 PENDANT
£5.50

KING DEATH
R.17p RING
£5.99

ST. BRIDES
TABLET
WITH BRONZE
TABLE
P.87 PENDANT
£8.99

RIEDER'S AXE
P.1 PENDANT
£4.99
E.1 EARRING
£4.99

THE
CURSE
P.60
PENDANT
£4.50
E.60 PENDANT
£4.50

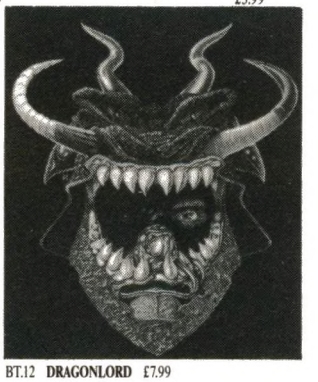
HADES
CREST
P.91 PENDANT
£3.99
E.91 EARRING
£3.99

SINISTRUM GUITAR
P.84 PENDANT £3.99
E.84 EARRING £3.99

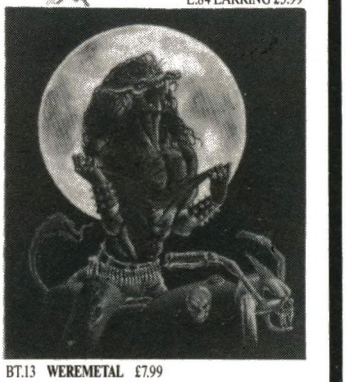
ALCHEMY battle-dress©

HERNIC SKULL
P.81 PENDANT
£5.99

BT.11 **THE VAMPAMIST** £7.99



BT.12 **DRAGONLORD** £7.99



BT.13 **WEREMETAL** £7.99

QUALITY BLACK T-SHIRTS AVAILABLE IN MEDIUM, LARGE AND X-LARGE AT £7.99

FAST MAIL ORDER

- TELEPHONE CREDIT CARD HOLDERS WELCOME (0533 549182 or 546636)
- PLEASE MAKE PAYMENT OUT TO "RIEDER'S AXE"
- U.K. P+P – ADD £1.00 PER TOTAL ORDER. C.O.D. ORDERS WELCOME – PLEASE ADD £4
- OVERSEAS P+P – ADD 20% OF ORDER TOTAL VALUE (£1.00 MIN). ORDERS MADE PAYABLE BY STERLING GIROBANK, I.M.O.S., ACCESS AND VISA

ALCHEMY CATALOGUE £1.00 (+ S.A.E.)

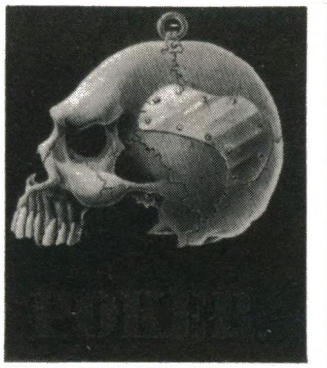
OUR NEW 24 PAGE COMPREHENSIVE FULL COLOUR CATALOGUE INCLUDING METAL WEAR, POSTERS, TANKARDS, ZIPPO'S, T-SHIRTS, PATCHES, LEATHER BELTS, ETC, IS STUFFED FULL OF CURIOSITIES.

RIEDER'S AXE, 5 BRAUNSTONE GATE, LEICESTER LE3 5LH
TEL: (0533) 549182 or 546636

©1989 THE ALCHEMY CARTA

THE ALCHEMY CARTA: THE CRAFTER OF ALCHEMY AND POKER – FOR TRADE & EXPORT TEL: (0533) 549182 – ASK FOR SAN, JUDY OR LISA

BT.14 **DRAKONVERT** £7.99



BT.15 **METALHEAD – POKER** £7.99

PLAYING GOD

I done something amazing. I done something wich milions of peple have been trieing to do for milions of yeres. Ill be a hero, Ill probly get an OBE or something from Her Majesty (God Bles Her). Peple will chere me in the stretes and ask for my ortagraff and all that.

Ill tell you what I done and how I done it. It was qite esie realy, qite strateforwerd. Maybe thats wye no ones ever been abel to do it before, because it was so esie no one thought to do it that way. But Im geting ahede of myself arnt I, Ill take you throgh it step by step. Im riting it down like this as I supose a kind of testerment, a sort of record for fewtere generasions, a bit like the Bibel realy.

Anyway this is what hapened. Were I live its like a bedsit in a hose. Its a bit manky, the toylet lekes and theres like all damp on won of my wals but I put a poster over it, Cobra with Silvester Stalone, have you sene that film, its dead good. Anyway if I look owt of my window I can see this park over the rode were all these peple go joging, yupees and all that, and theres sometimes some realy nise berds and plenty of fat peple hoo look like there goeing to drop dead of hart atakes. (Only they wont anymore now because of what I done)

Anyway this won nite, I think it was last Wenseday, yes it was because the Chinky was shut so I had to have boreing old benes on toste for tee. Anyway I desided to go for a wark in the park and look at all the berds joging and that and so I went owt and warked acros the rode and went in throgh the gates. It was still qite lite becase its Agust and it dosent get dark til nine or something and it was qite warm so I just wore my tee shirt, my best won with Comando on it that I got in Virgin Megastore in town and my best jenes. Anyway I was warking arond and there were a a few peple joging but not many, no realy fit berds like I wanted, and then all of a suden I got like this bad pane, realy bad, in my arm and then in my chest.

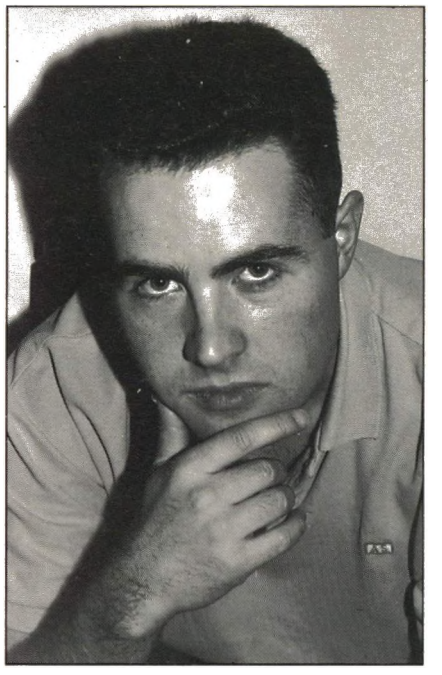
Anyway it was realy horible and my legs went like jely and I thoght Id pewke so I nelt down on the grond and wated for it to go away and sudenly I saw this like flash of wite owt of the corner of my iye and I looked up and there he was. Only I dident no it then, it wasent until later on that I started puting too and too together. At the time I just looked at this person and I showted "help" but he ignored me, he just ran past. He was yonge, abowt twentyfive or something, with this wite trake-suite and all blond hare. He looked line an angle realy wich was his joke I supose.

Anyway I think becase Id sene him, maybee because I was stronger than he thoght I was, he caried on runing and after a bit the feleing stoped. I stil felt sike and all that and swetey and my hart was banging like a drum but I manajed to get to my fete and walk home. I went in and Mrs Miller hoo lives downstares, shes old and shes got arthrites realy bad and I think shes a bit senile in the hede, anyway she says to me "you look realy pale Michael are yoo ill" and I says "no Im alrite thanks Mrs Miller, Ive been joging." Shell beleve anything you tell her, pore old cow.

Anyway I went upstares and made a cup of tee and drunk it but after a bit I pewked it all bake up agane so I went to bed. The next morning I woke up and I was fine.

Anyway a weke pased or something and I was ok, fit as a fidle, and then on the next Friday, I think it was, I desided to go in the park agane and look at all the berds joging. So of I went as well as can be expected, and warked arond a bit. I saw some kids playing fotbal and wached for a bit but then one of them ponted at me and sade something and the others all laghed and they gave me this funy look like I was won of them sexy purverts or something so I warked of but not before scowling at them and puting them in there plase.

Anyway then I saw these too berds, dead fit Im not joking. Won of them looked like



Mark Morris exploded onto the horror scene in 1989, when his first novel, *Toady* was published. He makes no apologies for the above photograph.

"Anyway then I saw these too berds, dead fit Im not joking."

Samantha Fox and the other won looked like Linda Luserdy. They both cold have been paje 3 girls no messing. Anyway they were joging along chating and everything and there tits were bobing up and down like Heven. Anyway won of them (the Linda Luserdy won) turned rond and give me the iye Im not joking. I smiled at them all sort of sexy and they gigled and so I started joging behind them abowt a few yards away, ten or so.

Anyway next thing I no it hapened agane, a big masive pane shooting up my arm and into my chest. I went cold all over then hot then I fell over, the grond just came up and hit me like the werld had gone upsidedown. I felt sike awfel and the pane was bad

everything clowded over and I thoght this is it but then some time pased althogh I dont remember much but it must have becase when I opened my iyes all these peple were lening over me, lots of jogers with swetey faces and some other peple and too men with uniforms on hoo put me on a stecher and then lifted me into an ambulense. Ther was lots of peple torking and runing arond and flashing lites and all that, but what I remember most is looking up ans seeing him there agin in his wite trake-suite, that yonge man with the blond hare all good looking like an angle. He was looking at me Im sure but when I looked at him he turned away and caried on joging. I tride to tell won of the ambulense men but he dident understand.

Anyway I was in hospital for a bit, abowt a weke. I had won visiter Mrs Miller. If yoo ask me it shold be her in hospital not me. All she torked abowt when she came to see me was creme crakers dont ask me wye. The doctors sade Id had a hart atack and Id been very lukey. They sade I had to stop smoking and drinking and cut down on fat and take more ecsersise but I mene I was joging when it hapened so that showes what they no doesnt it. Anyway I no what it was cased that hart atack. Id been doeing lodes of thinking lieing there and Id come to an amazing conclushen. My hart atack had been cased by that man in wite that joger. Twise Id sene him and twise Id bene struke down in my prime. I new this was more than a considense, I just new, it just came to me like God had sent me a mesaje or something. (maybee he had). That man looked like an angle but that was all a trike. In trewthe that man was not just an ordinary man at all. I new now withote a dobt of shadow that he was "Death" in person.

I no it sonds daft but if yoo think abowt it it isnt realy. The thing is peple always think of "Death" as beeing something importent like some big skelerten man all dresed in blake with won of this big curvy blade-things. But hes not like that at all hes just like yoo and me, he just blends in, its like camaflaje. No one ever nos hoo he is even thogh Ill bet lodes of peple have sene him.

Anyway when I got home I made a plan, I rote it all down rele prefeshernel like a bownty hunter like what Silvester wold have done, what Id nede and everything. I always rite things down, that way I never forget things. Anyway I got it all sorted and a few days later I was in the park again only this time I was redy. I was croched behind a bush wating, I felt strong and good like I had a frend from above looking down on me if yoo no what I mene.

Anyway I wated for abowt a long time, an hore or so but he dident show up. Lots of peple ran past my hideing place and never won of them gesed I was there I was that qite. It was like a panther realy I supose wating for its pray all silent and I was even all dresed in blake and I had burnt cork on my fase so Id blend in. I wated and wated never moveing even though my foot was goeing to slepe and I was borde as hell.

Anyway at last it started to get dark and I was thinking of caling it a day when my pashense was rewarded. Like before the ferst thing I saw was that flash of wite, that bloody trake-suite that never semed to get derty. (which prooves another pont). Shore enogh it was him ("Death") joging along like he dident have a care in the werld he even had a Sony Walkman on can yoo beleve his cheke. I cold see his blond hare boncing up and down and he dident even look swetey but only a taned iye like me cold have piked up a detale like that. Anyway he joged on down the path litle noeing

"If yoo ask me it shold be her in hospital not me."

what lay in wate for him. (ie, me). I let him get a litle way in front of me and then I berst owt of the bushes like a posesed deemen or something and I jumped on him.

Anyway after that things seemed to go in slow moton, maybe that was his trike his way of trieing to escape but it dident fool me o no. I was too strong for him, I had him on the flore and I was on him like a ton of brikes. He was qite wedey realy and he looked dead scared and he says "what are yoo doeing leve me alone" but I hit him in the mowth and made him blede and he shut up. Anyway I pined him down and I says to him "eve all had enogh of yoo, yore not goeing to case no more troble ever again". He says "I dont no what yore tarking abowt" but he did no, I cold see it in his iyes. Anyway I hit him agin to keep him qite and then I reched into my pokete and I got owt my garote. I says to him "Im goeing to do to yoo what you tride to do to me" and before he cold bat an iyebrow Id wond the garote rond his neke and I was draging him into the bushes.

He dident look so prety now I can tell yoo. (Ha Ha). His tonge was stiking owt and his fase was goeing all a funy color and he was makeing horible noses like gurgling and coghing and his hands were clawing at his throte and his nise wite trake-suite was all mudy. I just laghed at the noses he was making and I says "see how yoo like it yoo basterd" and then I finished the job there in the bushes and I enjoyed it.

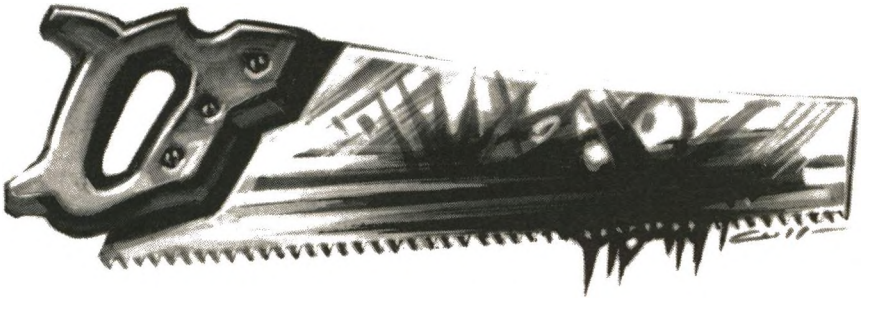
Anyway that wasent the end of it because Id sene these films were vampires and all that come bake from the dead so Id thoght Id beter do the job good and proper. I wated in the bushes with "Death" until it was dark and everywon had gone home and there wasent nobody left around and then I lifted "death" onto my bake, he was qite lite realy for what he was, and I caride him owt of the park and acros the rode and up to my bedsit withote not a sole spoting us.

Anyway I had the next bit all planed owt. I took "Death" into the bathrome and put him in the bath and then I put all bin liners and newspapers and all that on the flore. I had a new ax and a new saw which Id boght that day from a shop in town and I put them to good use that nite I can tell yoo. I choped and sawed "Death" into little peces, it was hard work, harder than choping wood and by the end of it my arms were kiling and I was sweteing like a bukete and there was blood everywere but it was worth it. Another thing Id thoght of was geting lots of plastic bags from Asda so I got all those and I put "Death" in them and put all selotape rond the top and then put all the litle bags into a bin liner and put lodes of selotape rond the top of that won as well.

Anyway when I done all that I washed the bath owt and the flore and the walls of all the blood and I washed my hands and my fase and I chanjed my cloths and put the old wons in another bin liner and then I took the too bin liners and put them in the dustbins owtside redey to be colected next morning. When Id done all that I had a last cheke rond to make sure everything was shipshape then I went to bed, I was tiered but hapy.

Anyway next morning (wich is this morning becase I only woke up too hores ago or something) I wated for the dustbin men to come becase they always come on a Tewseday, Id planed it that well. I ate my brekefast, sasage sanwich and a cup of tee and I sat on my chare and looked owt of the window.

Anyway at last just when I was geting nervose I here this big rumbling nose and

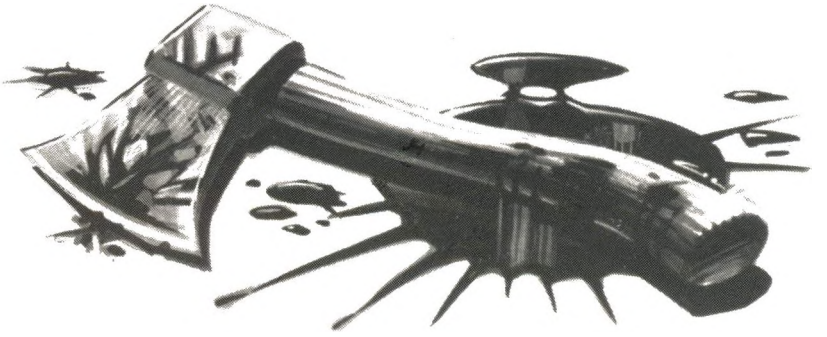


then this big yelow dustbin lory comes rond the corner. All the men got of and I cold fele the buterflise all in my tumy, then they come up ower path and I felt like I wanted to screme or something. Anyway I needent wory because this won, this niger feler with them dredelokes in his hare opened the bin with "Death" in it and starts to lift owt the bag. I cold see he was having troble, "Death" was qite hevey I admit it, so he cals won of his mates over, this ginormose bald feler to help him. Then the too of them lifts owt the bag and caries it up the path and withote bating an iyebrow chukes it in the bake of the lory. I see them big tethe chewing up the rubish and I see it chewing up "Death" and I see some blood but no one of the men seems to notise. Anyway I felt a

". . . he cals won of his mates over, this ginormose bald feler, to help him."

big wate lift up of my sholders and I got my jakete and went owt for a wark arond, I even says "morning" to the men as I goes owt but they ignorde me and then I here a few of them laghing behind my bake but I smieled to myself and I thoght Ill be yore heroe soon enogh you just see.

Anyway that all hapened a litle wile ago and now I admit it Im a bit woried. You see I pased a paper shop and I notised in The Sun it says "50 DIE IN PLANE CRASH" and Im thinking if I kiled "Death" how cold this be. But maybee I thoght they were dead before I kiled "Death" in which case everything is fine but how can I be shore. Ive desided that theres only won way, I have to do a little experement. Ive desided to try it on Mrs Miller (shes old and a bit senile and shes got her arthrites so if Im ronge things wont be so bad). Im goeing down there now too pretend to have a chat but when Im in there Ill get my garote owt of my pokete and do the bisnise and well see what hapens. If Im ronge Ill have a bit of a problem to dele with I admit it but hopefuly that wont be the case. Im shore anyway Im rite, The Sun must have got it ronge, it userly does. Ill be bake soon to rite down what hapens.



EVENT HORIZON

Contact us for details of:

SUMMERFEST

The Live Role Play Convention

Write to us now for our new information leaflet with news of:

SCIENCE FICTION L.R.P.
INVESTIGATIVE L.R.P.
L.R.P. HOLIDAYS

Tel 0742 478514
or
0860 453928

Event Horizon Ltd
9 Westland Grove
SHEFFIELD
S19 5EU

PLAYERS

UNIT 13, CATFORD MEWS
CATFORD, LONDON SE6

081-314-1081

LONDON'S NEWEST STORE FOR RPG, STRATEGY/TACTICAL, BOARD & WAR GAMES. STOCKISTS OF A LARGE RANGE OF FIGURES BY CITADEL, RAL-PARTHA, PRINCE AUGUST, GRENADIER, ESSEX, MINI FIGS, ALTERNATIVE ARMIES, MARAUDER, HOBBYGAMES, etc. RULES BY WRG, TABLETOP. 16-BIT SOFTWARE

MAIL ORDER WELCOMED

ACCESS AND BARCLAYCARD ACCEPTED

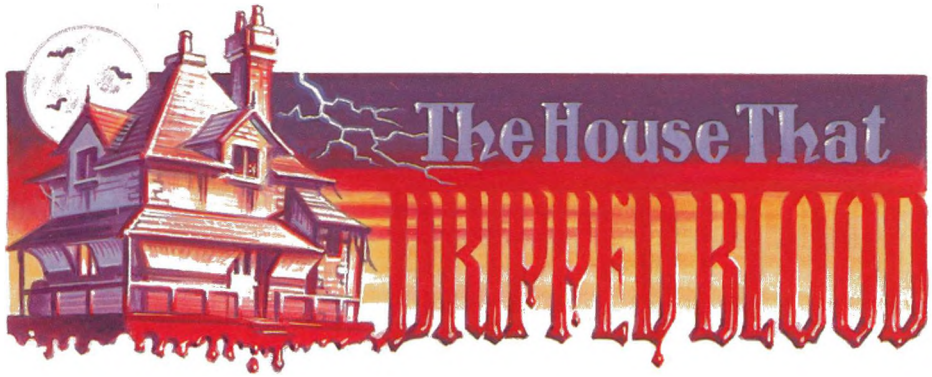


PHOTO: Seamus A Ryan

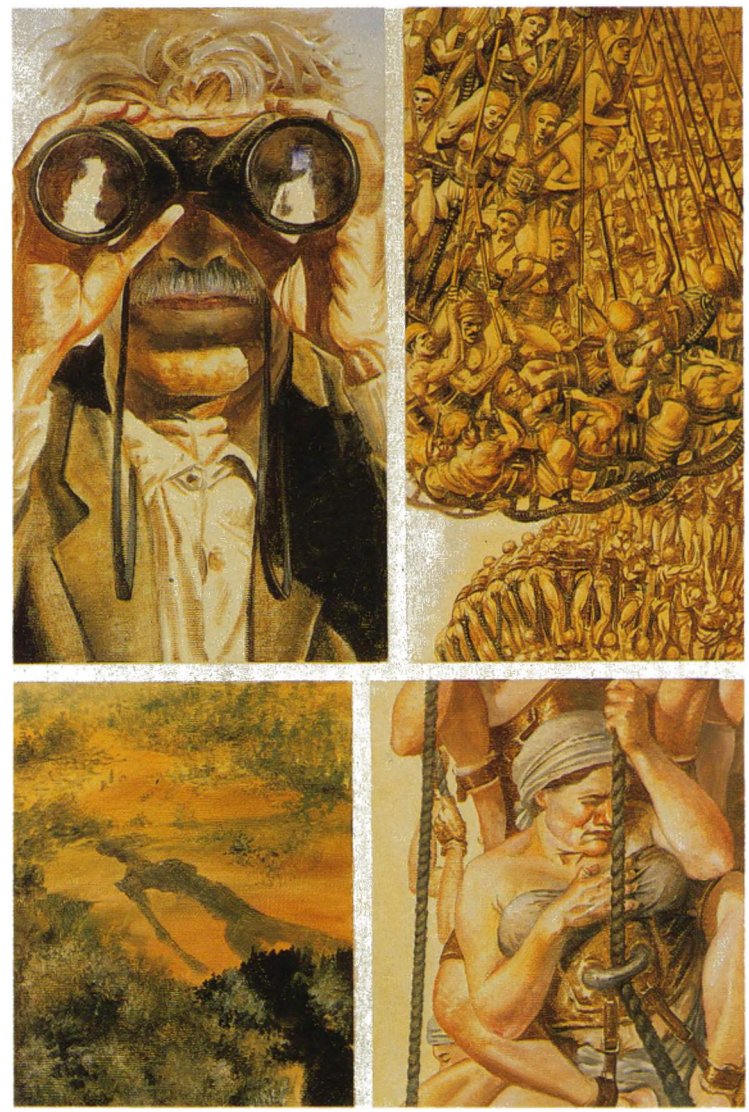
Dave Hughes' *At Home With* series ran for some time in *Fear* magazine, but since news of *Skeleton Crew* broke it has been dropped. Dave has therefore decided to run the irregular column in *Crew*. In this issue, he visited *Crew* cover artist John Bolton.

John Bolton is, whether he likes it or not, a star. He is a brilliant artist in several genres and numerous media. He is good-looking. He dresses well. He has a gorgeous house and family to match. He speaks nicely. He has famous friends. He is well liked throughout his field of work — and, perhaps more importantly, respected too. The fact that he is almost unheard of outside the world of comics is not simply a shame — it is a crime. Mention (okay, *drop*) his mane to anyone not familiar with the last decade's comics and you will be greeted with a blank stare. *House of Hammer*, you'll ask? *Hellraiser*? *X-Men*? *Tapping The Vein*? Still no joy. So. with a sigh, you ask it they remember *the* sex scene from THE TALL GUY starring Jeff Goldblum and Emma Thompson. Sudden recognition. Well, you'll say, John Bolton story boarded *that* scene. *Did* he? Sudden interest. Only at *that* stage can you tell whoever-it-is that he's your front cover artist. *Really?*

One could not even begin to list his comic credits, for after reading several dozen interviews with him, meeting him on numerous occasions, and talking for literally hours on the 'phone, I'm *still* finding out things he's done that I didn't know about. So being invited out to one of his studios — the one that is situated in a spare room of his house in Highgate, North London — was an almost indescribable pleasure. The actual area is Crouch End, home at one time or another to Clive Barker, Peter Straub, Stephen King, Brian Lumley, Christopher Fowler and Kim Newman. The house is large, immaculate and full of daylight, with here and there the hint that this is the home of an artist. Few signs exist outside the studio that Bolton is a comic artist, however, perhaps because unlike so many in his field, he is not *just* a comic artist . . .

He became interested in comics at an early age, through magazines such as *Look and Learn* and *Famous Monsters of Filmland*, but it wasn't until he saw a slideshow on Marvel Comics at East Ham Technical College (which he was attending at the time) that Bolton considered that his artistic talents might best be expressed in comic form. For him, comics were not a last resort. He recognised their potential as a direct result of that slideshow: "When you see something twelve feet square it suddenly becomes Art," he says. "It ceases to be that small, insignificant panel becomes very powerful." Bolton's innovative approach to sequential art has seen him rise to the very top of the current crop of artists working in comics — he is currently working for DC, Marvel, Eclipse, Epic, Dark Horse Innovation and others. Yet he still finds time to paint covers for horror magazines.

For all the many commissions he is currently working on, there is still very little similarity between one Bolton piece and another. Few critics could describe a piece as 'typical Bolton' and the word 'Boltonist' is unlikely to enter Art vocabularies, despite his undeniable unique talent. Bolton explains thus: "The most important thing is the way you tell the story, and to present a complete package." In other words, inspiration comes not from outside influences, nor from within, but from the story that he is illustrating. A good example of this is THE VAMPIRELESTAT, for which he is painting all twelve covers (which may later appear as a portfolio). Each



A few frames from *In The Hills, The Cities*

". . . inspiration comes not from outside influences, nor from within, but from the story he is illustrating."

cover forms few bonds with the others in the series; rather their style stems from the content and emotion of a particular issue's story.

There is one area of similarity between one Bolton piece and another. Study the faces of his painted characters and you will very quickly become familiar with his style. This is because Bolton prefers to draw from life: himself, his lovely wife Liliana, and their two Bolton-clone children (who were the EXPLORERS — type protagonists of Ann Nocenti's and Bolton's graphic novel SOMEPLACE STRANGE) frequently turn up in his paintings. And when it is not filled with his 'model' family, his studios are populated with sculpture of his comic characters (including a delightful plasticene Cenobite from his HELLRAISER story which, to my eternal frustration, he will probably never part with). Being asked to paint the cover for this very issue seems to delight him not for the chance to do something new, but because it's a good excuse to buy, at last, a skeleton's hand that he's had his eye on in a medical supplies shop.

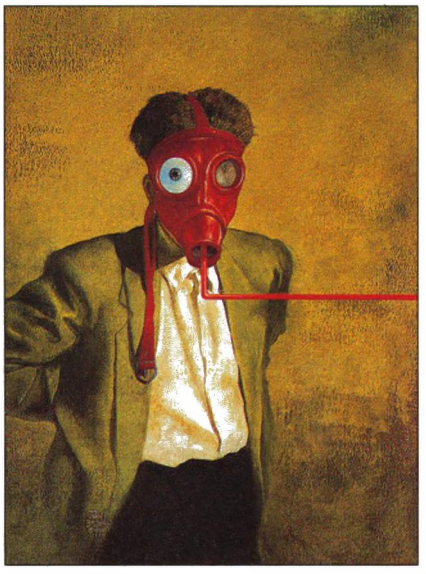
Yet there have been outside influences, though these appear to have been formative as a whole rather than inspirational individually. He cannot name individual artist who have influenced him because, he says, they are literally "too numerous to mention", but he cites movements such as Expressionism, Dadaism and Surrealism as powerful motivations. He lists Mervyn Peake and Clive Barker as influential writers, and I dismiss his apology for mentioning the latter name: it is clear from his recent work that he is not joking. "I gave up reading horror stories because they'd just become so bland and boring to me. Clive's stories — I'm talking about THE BOOKS OF BLOOD- got me back into horror fiction. He took a genre full of clinches and managed to bring something new to it. With Clive there really are no limits. He takes you to places and shows you things you really do not want to experience." After his TAPPING THE VEIN adaptation of Barker's *In The Hills, The Cities*, Bolton has now begun *The Yattering and Jack*, which began life as a 'VEIN story but has now "grown to at least fifty pages of fully painted artwork", which will be a separate publication, although still from Eclipse. Bolton has very definite views about which films he likes most, citing Hitchcock and Lynch as his two favourite directors, and EVIL DEAD 11, ERASERHEAD, FANTASIA (shortly to re-appear at UK cinemas)and ALIENS as his favourite films. "I'm told I should put down Wim Wenders' WINGS OF DESIRE", he adds, "but I haven't seen it yet!

'Busy' doesn't begin to describe Bolton at the moment. Although he has been doing a lot of 'small' jobs recently — covers for CHEVAL NOIR, HELLRAISER, FLY IN MY EYE, A1, 'LESTRAT and SKELETON CREW; short strips for A1 and FLY' — he is cur-

PHOTO: Seamus A Ryan

"The fact that he is almost unheard of outside the world of comics is . . . a crime."

JOHN©1989
BOLTON



"Portrait of the artist in a gas mask"

rently working on several fully-painted comics, one of which (THE BOOK OF MAGIC) is for DC Comics. This series, written by Neil Gaiman, has its first issue illustrated by Bolton, using "a variety of techniques,such as acryclics, sprays, oils and airbrushes". Then there is SHAME for Dark Horse Comics: three books written by Canadian Loverne Kindzierski which, again, are fully painted. The covers for Dark Horse's third ALIENS series which may also double as production sketches for the third ALIEN movie ("one never knows!"). Three of the next four covers for SKELETON CREW, plus a full-page illustration to accompany next issue's short story by Nicholas Vince. "And then, *next* week . . ."

The fact that Bolton continues to accept work when its seems he cannot possibly comfortably take on any more, and yet meets deadlines, and that he is as keen to accept work for a small project (and fee)as a large project for a large publisher (and fee) is as much a testament to his support for the horror genre as a statement of the kind of person he is.

John Bolton is one of the two British comic artists whose covers can make you buy something you would never otherwise have bothered with. He's already one of the best in his field, in this country or any other.

And if you didn't already know that . . . *catch up.*

– I LOVE YOU! I DOTE ON THAT FACE SO DIVINE!
I MUST AND WILL HAVE YOU AND FORCE MAKES YOU MINE!"
"MY FATHER! MY FATHER! OH HOLD ME NOW FAST!
HE PULLS ME! HE HURTS, AND WILL HAVE ME AT LAST
THE FATHER, HE TREMBLED; HE DOUBLED HIS SPEED
O'ER HILLS AND THROUGH FORESTS HE SPURRED HIS BLACK STEED
BUT WHEN HE ARRIVED AT HIS CASTLE-DOOR
LIFE THROBBED IN THE SWEET BABY'S BOSOM NO MORE.

A page from "The Erl King" from FLY IN MY EYE

Science Fiction, Fantasy, Horror and Comic Book Shop

Open 7 Days A Week

Sunday 11.00am-8.00pm
Mon-Sat 9.30am-9.00pm

Mail Order & Wholesale

Calamity

COMICS AND VIDEOS

160 STATION ROAD, HARROW, MIDDX, HA1 2RH
TEL: 01 - 427 3831

LATEST

- *VIDEOS*
- *FILM MAGAZINES*
- *T - SHIRTS*
- *MODEL KITS*
- *BADGES*
- *POSTERS*

Latest U.S. Imports

Huge selection of Back Issues

Graphic Novels

Viz Comic & Merchandise

OPENING TIMES
MON - SAT
9.30 - 6.00

1: The Land of 'Do As You Please'

Just what is this role-playing business, then? It seems to involve a bunch of people with nothing better to do, sitting around for hours playing 'let's pretend' together.

It's also about fantasy, escapism and wish fulfilment; about using your brain in interesting ways. Roleplaying can take you on the wildest flights of fancy, to the darkest corners of the human mind or the farthest reaches of the universe. At the best, it can give you about as big a buzz as can be had without breaking the law.

Contrary to what certain people would have you believe, it's not unhealthy, it's not infantile, you won't go blind and it won't even lead to having your soul possessed by demons. Everybody finds escapism in some form — Mills and Boon novels, Stall-one movies, Neighbours . . . you name it.

The attraction of the roleplaying game is that it's not a *passive* form of entertainment; it's an interaction between the members of the aforementioned idle shower, creating what amounts to an ongoing piece of fiction, in their chosen genre. Most of the people involved, the players, take on the roles of the major characters, whilst one, the referee, becomes the storyteller.

The referee's weighty task is to supply the plot, describe situations the players' characters find themselves in, play all the other characters and rule on the outcome of characters' actions. Essentially, the referee is the story's narrater, constantly adjusting the plot in response to the actions of the characters.

For me, this is the key to enjoying roleplaying: to treat the game as a collaborative effort, to involve all concerned in an entertaining story and have a damn good time in doing so.

I'm not going to drivel on about 'game mechanics' and 'effective combat simulations' since it's a heap of crap and a distraction from the real strengths of role-playing. Discussing dice rolling and character generation is like a film reviewer giving a lecture on the mechanics of a camera . . . a waste of bloody time and totally missing the point.

Obviously, you *are* going to need one game or another, and choosing one can be a bewildering experience. This isn't helped by the fact that if you use ten roleplayers which is the best game, you'll get ten different answers. And they'll all be right.

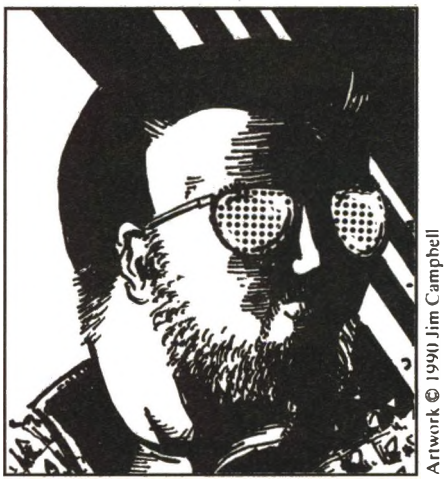
I can't tell you which game would best suit you-that depends on your preferred genre, how prepared you are to grapple with complex rules, and a dozen other factors individual to each of you.

As far as recreating other genres through role-playing games — take advice. Most staff at specialist game shops, will be happyto help out if you explain vaguely what you're interested in (though I wouldn't recommend Games Workshop for beginner's, since they tend to hard sell their products which are often neither cheapest or best).

However, far too *much* emphasis is placed on the game system — it's simply a way of supplying a logical framework for one's imagination to work within, defining characters' abilities and providing some absolutes for figuring the success or failure of characters' actions. Rules are *not* carved in stone; the referee is not bound into their service — what you don't like about a given game, simply change or ignore. It really *is* that simple.

The Hell with rulebooks, then. What I want to talk about instead are the sort of things I wish *I'd* known when I started roleplaying. Most of what follows is aimed at potential referees, because their job is absolute murder after years of experience and can be a nightmare initially. But first . . .

. . . A word to would-be players. You've been initiated into the first mystery of role-playing, you've rattled odd-looking dice whose scores relate to the peculiar ritual of



Artwork © 1990 Jim Campbell

Jim Campbell, a veteran of the roleplaying section of the old *Skeleton Crew*, tells the uninitiated what the hobby is all about.

". . . what you don't like about a given name, simply change or ignore."

". . . Conan and Indiana Jones are not within the scope of initial characters . . ."

'character generation'. You now have a piece of paper bearing some numbers and a few bare facts. This, you are told, is your character' and you will play his/her role in any adventure.

It's up to you to decide what kind of person s/he is, within the confines of these numbers, which define your abilities. Remember: Conan and Indiana Jones are *not* within the scope of initial characters. That sort of power has to be earned through a lot of hard adventuring.

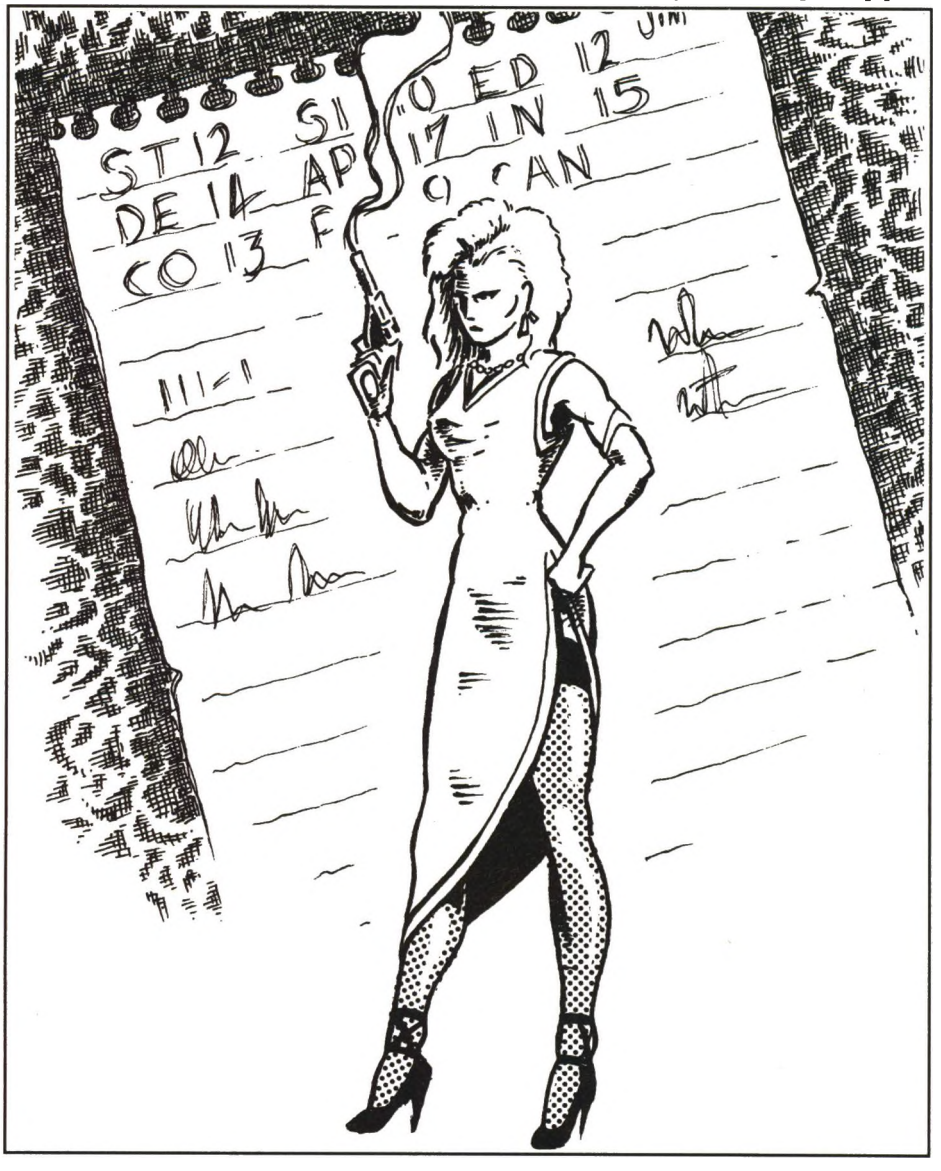
This doesn't mean that characters who're just starting out can't be fun, but they *are* pretty weak. It just means that you have to be a little bit more clever, sneakier and nastier than whatever your referee has created as an opponent. In fact, finding ways to stitch up an opponent whilst minimizing any danger to your character can be an enjoyable challenge.

Also, keep your characterization simple. Give your character goals and beliefs that will be easy to maintain and keep within. That's not to say that your character has to be two-dimensional — s/he could have deep-rooted psychological reasons for, say, being afraid of fire, which is fine since pyrophobia is easy to play.

Giving your character a fully-blown, neurotic mother-fixation, on the other hand, is useless; you'd have to be Alan Guiness to play it successfully and it would have little bearing on the game or your character's relationship to others (unless you enter the realms of force 'Gasp! That creature! It . . . . it looks like — choke- my mother!')

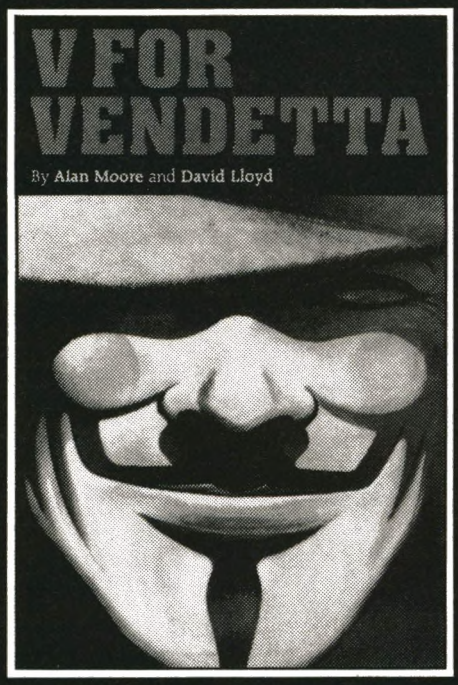
Keeping characters relatively simple will make them morecomfortable to play and won't require a Herculean effort of method acting to carry off. Similarly, characters don't *need* twenty-five years of minutely detailed personal history behind them. It's worth sketching in a few major events (say, getting thrown out of the army), but no-one gives a damn whether your character was bitten on the left ankle by a small dog whilst attending St. Oswald's Sheltered Creche for the Terminally Nervous!

Don't worry about creating a chequered history to help characterization — your character will acquire one through play and they'll have plenty of time to pick up pec-



Artwork © 1990 Jim Campbell

NIGHTMARES and DREAMS



V © and ™ DC Comics Inc, 1990

V FOR VENDETTA
ALAN MOORE and DAVID LLOYD

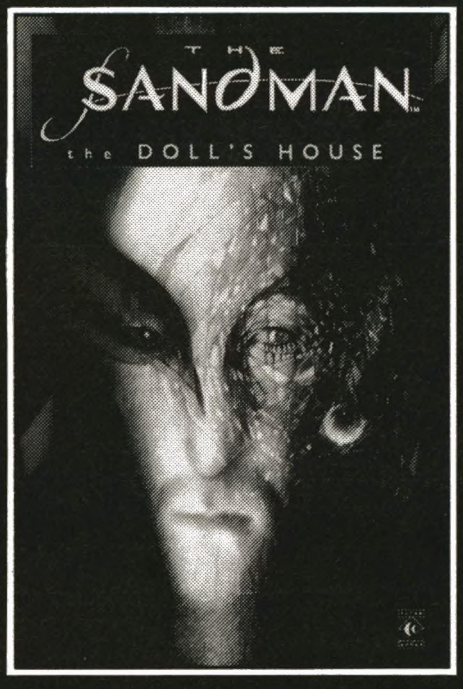
Everyone knows you can't beat the system...
Everyone but V.
From the awesome imagination of Alan Moore, illustrated with stark, brooding menace by David Lloyd, the most eagerly awaited graphic novel of the year!
'A work of passionate individuality and morality, a work of outrage and hope'

£9.95
288 pages
Full-colour graphic novel

THE SANDMAN: THE DOLL'S HOUSE
NEIL GAIMAN, MIKE DRINGENBERG, MALCOLM JONES III et al.

In dreams he walks with you... The Sandman, master of dreams and nightmares comes face to face with a serial killers convention, a man who refuses to die and his mysterious sister, Death!
Neil Gaiman's award-winning work, introduced by Clive Barker with a spectacular new cover by Dave McKean.

£7.95
256 pages
Full colour graphic novel



Sandman © DC Comics Inc, 1990

TITAN BOOKS...ONLY THE VERY BEST IS GOOD ENOUGH.
AVAILABLE FROM ALL GOOD BOOK AND COMIC SHOPS.

TITAN BOOKS

uliar neuroses and foibles. You'll find the character develop it's own accord, in challenging and interesting ways.

All right, would-be referees out there, I've sorted out your players so now you can take a few hints, and you're going to *need* them. Y'see, if an adventure flops, it'll all be your fault. If everyone has a brilliant time, there will be much back-slapping amongst the players and hardly anyone will give you the slightest credit. It's a fairly thankless task and that's why there are always more players than referees.

However, freaks like me actually *prefer* refereeing, since it can ultimately be more rewarding than playing. The referee's job is to help the players have a good time by supplying an enjoyable, challenging adventure and to oversee it well, leaving the players feeling that they've actually achieved a victory when it's all over.

The problem with far too many adventures (including a depressing number of 'professionally written' ones) is that they have a linear structure which leaves players feeling restricted, as if they are only going through the actions.

There is no real challenge in an adventure circulated along the lines of '. . . arrive at room 3, encounter monster X. Monster X posesses item Y. Proceed to room 4 and encounter monster Z, which can only be defeated using item Y. Move on to room 5 . . .' Dull. Dull. Dull. There's no excitement or adventure in shuffling characters from one pre-arranged encounter to another — not for the players and certainly not for the referee. It's very *easy* to referee such an adventure, but it's also seriously boring.

Frankly, it's impossible *not* to make your adventure linear to some degree. The trick is to minimize the 'fixed points' of the plot, allowing the players much more freedom and creating a certain amount of uncertainty for the referee (and so making it more interesting for him/her as well).

With a little practice, it's possible to reduce the set-pieces to the beginning and end of an adventure, allowing the players to make all the running in-between. Instead of a rigidly linear structure like the one outlined above, adventures can beconstructed with only two 'fixed points': beginning — 'a distressed woman arrives on a character's doorstep, demanding investigation of her brother's disappearance.' And end 'a all-out conflict at a black mass in a deserted Liverpool warehouse.'

The course of the plot between these two points is then up to the players, supplemented by a pool of information known only to the referee: 'the players can find out what has gone on before they took the case by consulting *this* book or *that* file. Mr Brown, mentioned in *this* newspaper report, knows what is currently going on, but not who is responsible or why. This is known by Mr Green, who can also direct them to Mrs Jones, who has a clue to where the kidnapped boy is held. If the players' characters (PCs) are careless in their investigation, they will alert the kidnappers, who will set a gang of crazed bikers on them . . .'

The linear framework enables the referee to feed the players information, whilst making them work at finding out exactly what's happening.

Flexibility is the key to this style of refereeing — if the players are intelligent then reward them. If they are tracking down a clue and look somewhere clever, in a place you hadn't thought of, give the clue to them (and pretend *that* was how you planned it all along). If their stupid, punish them hard. If they foolishly expose their characters to unnecessary danger, then kill a few of the stupid bastards. They'll soon get the message.

And the most important skill of a referee? Cheating. Yes, that's right, bending twisting or ignoring the rules without telling anyone. When you're refereeing well, the pace of the adventure, the level of danger, the amount of injury the characters are sustaining in various skirmishes, should all be under your tight control. If, however, you're slavishly abiding by dice rolls governing, say, combat injuries, then the fickle whim of fate is very likely to throw an inordinately large spanner into the adventure's carefully oiled works. You may well end up with more of the PCs at death's door at *precisely* the wrong moment. So you cheat, ignoring, changing or inventing the results of dice rolls as you see fit, in order to maintain the flow of the game.

Mind you, this high-minded advice is all very well, but frankly your early efforts are going to fall a *long* way short of this lofty improvisational ideal: mine did, yours sure as shit will. But however diabolical, ridiculous or just plain disastrous your first few forays into role-playing are (as player *or* referee), they're *not* failures. The initial disasters are the most important part of the learning process (and are often quite funny).

Players aren't going to be able to create mighty characters who've stepped fully-formed from the pages of heroic fiction — starting characters are grubby little zeros who know sod-all and it's important that referees remember that, no matter how greatthe temptation to start straight in on an epic, world-shaking series of adventures. The first few adventures should be low-key scrabblings in the gutter. It will help the players realise how far they've come when they finally *do* make it to the major leagues.

That's enough patronising advice on your first, faltering steps into unknown territory. What do I know? Do your own thing: that's what role-playing is all about, after all.

This emphasis on individuality is what makes each game unique — each is a collective imaginations involved. However, the setting and the background must initially come from the referee (although *some* games do provide a usable background), and creating one can be pretty daunting, since not everyone is creative enough to pull it off. For this reason, lifting the setting for your adventures wholesale from somewhere else suddenly starts to look attractive. In short, swipe it. There is, admittedly a certain type of role— player who takes a dim view of swiping reference material, who whiffles airily about 'creative integrity' and takes the whole hobby far too seriously. Technically, these are known as 'arseholes'.

Swipe at will. Steal from films, comic-books, novels. If you steal from enough sources, the result will probably come out looking original. Ripping off a work of fiction in its entirety will probably take a lot more work, and many not even transfer to your game. A horror background based on Clive Harker's HELLRAISER may not come off, since PCs won't stand a cat in Hell's chance against a Cenobite. Similarly, a SF game nicked from Bill Gibson's cybrerpunk novels sounds great but the cyberspace sequences *will not* transfer from the page to the game convincingly.

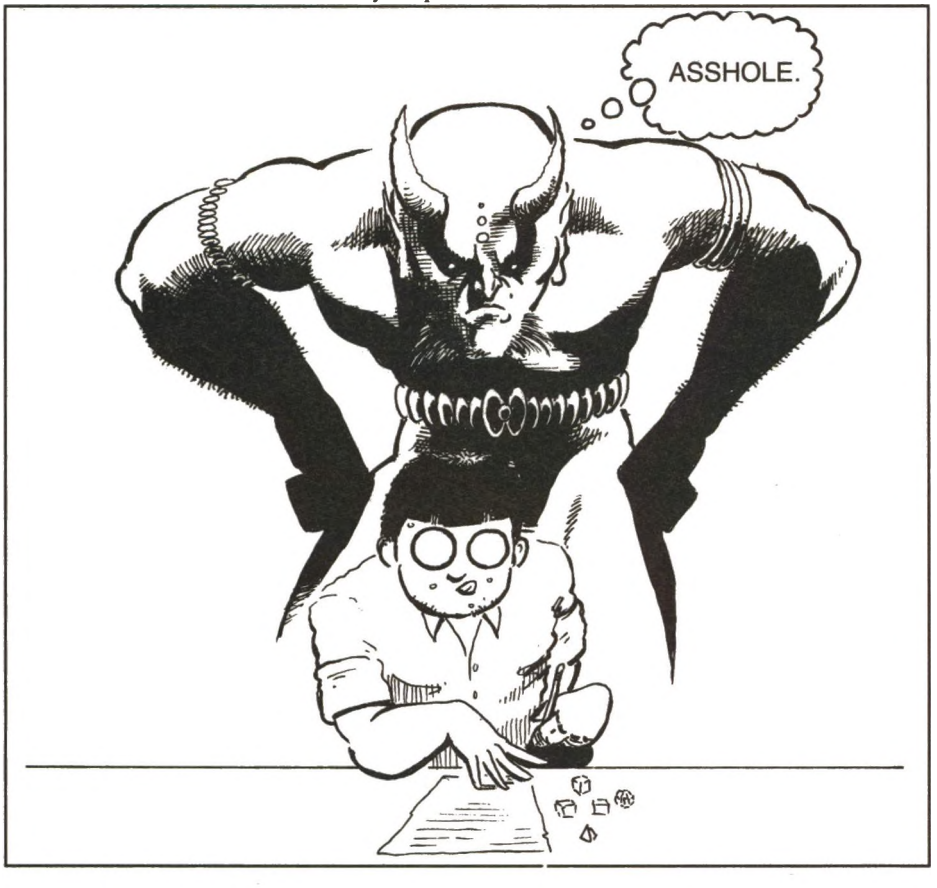
I'm not trying to put you off converting fiction to role— playing, but it is important to realise the potential problems, before you get away with the idea of using *this* novel or *that* film, by all means experiment, but if you hit and miss about equally, then you'll be doing well.

There is, though, one general point which I can't stress enough. *Always* treat your game as a collective effort. Referee and players are all there to enjoy themselves and as soon as the relationship between the referee and the players stops being co— operative and becomes adversotial, you might as well all go home.

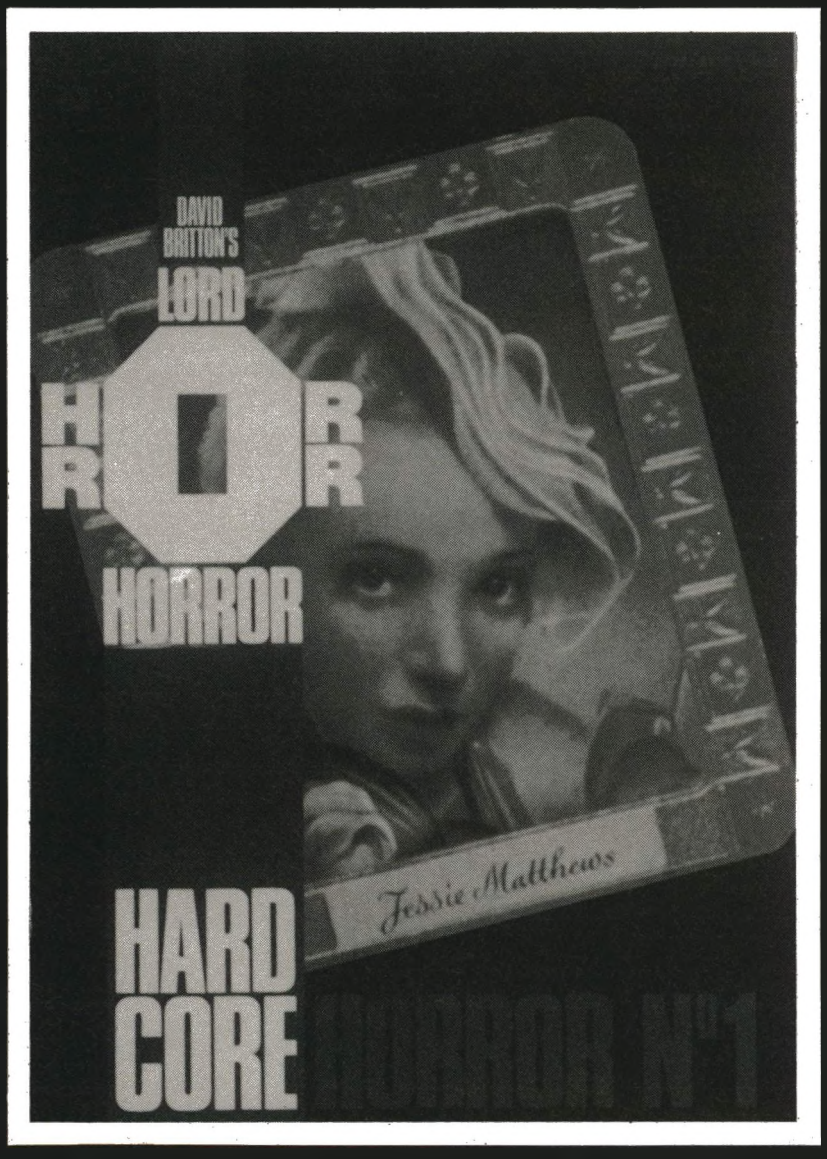
Hostility (or even open warfare) between the *characters* can be fun (PARANOIA is a brilliant funny example, raising inter— character conflict to levels otherwise unheard of). The trouble comes when players start making life deliberately difficult for the referee (quoting/inventing obscure rules, arguing with *every* decision he makes) or the referee starts playing 'screw the players' (arbitrary/unfair decisions, insoluble problems, unkillable monsters) then the game quickly dies.

Of course, the real attraction of role-playing is that you can do what the Hell you like. You're standing at the threshold of a realm as big as your imagination, filled with wonders and horrors and everything in between. Come in and join us — find out why we've made this place our second home.

Welcome to the land of do-as-you-please . . .



Next issue: Roleplaying in the* ALIENS *universe.



DAVID BRITTON'S

LORD HORROR

FIVE PART MINI SERIES

HARD-CORE-HORROR

ONE
THE ROMANCE OF LORD HORROR AND JESSIE MATTHEWS

TWO
CHURCHILL'S TICK-TOCK MEN

THREE
HORROR TIME FOR HITLER (WIR NICHTS WISSEN KÖNNEN)

FOUR
ENTROPY GOING DOWN SLOW

FIVE
KING HORROR: ZERO

Illustrated by Kris Guidio, John Coulthart, Harry Douthwaite, Sharon Bassin.

Savoy's new comic. **The Romance of Lord Horror and Jessie Matthews,** celebrates the courtship of **LORD HORROR** (the doppelganger of **LORD HAW-HAW,** aka **WILLIAM JOYCE,** England's wartime traitor hung for Treason in 1945), and the famous 1920's sweetheart – the incomparable **JESSIE MATTHEWS,** the greatest film starlet England has produced.

As the couple's tragic romance melodramatically and ironically unfolds, a number of distinguished persons make appearances in the sub-plot. Lord Horror, our heroic protagonist, reveals his real name to be Horace William Joyce, and introduces his brother, the writer **JAMES JOYCE** and wife **NORAH JOYCE, T.S. ELIOT** and wife **VIVIENNE ELIOT, EZRA POUND, FRED ASTAIR** and **UNITY MITFORD.**

#1 Now Available £1.25 direct from Savoy, 279 Deansgate, Manchester M3 4EW. (061 833 2664).

dEAD CREWCIAL

PHOTO: Photo-Me Studios

In the first of our regular looks at classics of horror by guest writers, Stuart Green, editor of *Speakeasy*, looks at that comic milestone, *Arkham Asylum*.

Grant Morrison and Dave McKean are magpies; vultures; thieves. In ARKHAM ASYLUM (DC Comics/Titan Books) they erect a modern passion play using scraps of Freud, the ragged bones of Lewis Carroll, wrapped around with trace elements of Charlie Manson and Antonio Artaud. ARKHAM ASYLUM is the scariest Batman story ever told.

The Batman they present us with is one more symbol; an icon. Little more than a smudge on the horizon, he is passive, where Batman is never passive. From the start, where Batman is traditionally summoned by the Bat-signal, to the end, where his fate is decided by a toss of Two-Face's coin, this Batman is not in control; he cannot be. He is no more a creature of his own making than were the Beatles or Nelson Mandela. Appropriate, then, that this should be the final document of 1989, The Year of The Bat (*that* year?).

The plot is almost classically simple, drawing on conventions from horror cinema (Hitchcock's PSYCHO) and literature (Poe's THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER). The Batlegend answers the call, told that the lunatics have taken over Arkham Asylum, until now nothing more than a convenient dumping ground for DC villains in limbo. It will never be the same again. Now, it is a place of terror; a place where the bogeymen are put away for a while. Some hostages have been taken and the Joker wants Batjaws (McKean allows us few details of the Bat — his nose and his jaw — he is less a man than a collection of signs) in exchange. Commissioner Gordon tells him that he doesn't have to go, but there's no traditional comic book reliance on the need to avoid bloodshed here: he 'has to go'.

Arkham legend has it that a bat haunts the place. Whether it is our Best Boy Bat, the Caped Crusader, the Dark Knight, or Killer Croc (who lives upstairs) is carefully shrouded. The Joker addresses him as a lover: they need each other; they are bound up together, the lines blurring between them. It is a trial and an initiation. Batman comes home; the house is going to claim him. The Joker is going to poke his dirty fingers into Batman's mind. This bat carries a cross.

He is given one hour to find his way out before all Grant Morrison's favourite villians come after him. McKean's interpretation of the cast is wild. The Joker is a still life whose expression never changes, his mouth frozen in a hideous rictus that should only have been imposed by death. A vicious blood-red scratch tears the page as he speaks. Sid James is used as a model for the Mad Hatter, a child molester. *Bless This House*. Clayface leaks disease; Batears shatters his leg trying to wipe him away.

In the end, Bats gets out because he has to. Two-Face's coin has to land face up. The battle has to go on, not least because DC demand it, but because the dance has to go on; it's practically classical. Batman proved himself last year as a potent symbol (August 11, you remember) that taps straight into the masspsyche. Yet it's a strange figure that is being proposed here: a hero whose sexuality we doubt, whose sanity we question; that frightens us; whose mission we don't question; whose methods are dubious.

IN short, *that* Man.

Artwork © 1989 DC Comics Inc.

"It is a trial and an initiation."

A WRITE ROYLE ANTHOLOGY

Stephen Gallagher, Philip Nutman, Mark Morris, Ramsey Campbell, Nicholas Royle, Kim Newman . . . It may sound like a typical SKELETON CREW lineup, but it is in fact a taste of what's to come in Nicholas Royle's DARKLANDS anthology, to be published by Xanadu later this year. Twenty-one stories, all original, mixing old stalwarts like the above, Lisa Tuttle and Graham Masterton with unpublished writers, make for an interesting mixture of short stories, especially that, in his introduction, Royle advises they are best not read "with the lights off"! As for the whereabouts of the scheduled Shaun Hutson story, or the role model for Royle's own story *The Editor*, time will, one would hope, tell.

HALLOWEEN 6: THE RETURN OF RUPERT MURDOCH

Every horror movie afficionado must have cringed at the recent front-page attack on the movie HALLOWEEN perpetrated by THE SUN 'news' paper. The story described how Robert Sartin went on a "rampage" with a gun after hearing voices telling him to shoot people. Armed with the information that a copy of the video had been found in Mr Sartin's home during a subsequent police search, THE SUN immediately made a connection between the violence of the film and the offence. The front page of the May 1 1990 edition printed the HALLOWEEN 4 video jacket and claimed — or, at least, inferred — that the movie had driven Simpson to violence. The story claimed that, in the four HALLOWEEN movies, "gallons of blood" were splashed around, and that Michael Myers is killed at the end of each film "but always returns for more bloodletting". There were, almost needless to say, several holes in the story. The use of the HALLOWEEN 4 jacket was misleading and unjustified, as it was released *more than a year* after the offence took place (on April 29 1989). Secondly, the HALLOWEEN movies most certainly do not involve "gallons of blood". Nor does Michael Myers appear in each one — HALLOWEEN 3: SEASON OF THE WITCH is unrelated to the Myers movies. The presiding judge ruled that Sartin was unfit to stand trial, describing him as an "acute schizophrenic". No claim was brought forward that his acts had been influenced by the small number of horror movies in his home video collection. So much for the court case. As for THE SUN's delightful piece of *reportage*, there is little we at the SKELETON CREW newsdesk can do but bring it to our readers' attention (although they number slightly less than THE SUN's alas) and back it up with a strong letter to the Press Council and the tabloid in question.

THE Sun

WIN £100,000 HOUSE FREE -Page 13

I HEARD VOICE OF VIDEO MICHAEL

Killer's mad obsession

HE'S BACK!

HALLOWEEN

CREW'LL LIE

The Skeleton Crew newsdesk is (0442) 66551 x266 or facsimile (0442) 66998

MOULDY FRUIT

Horror fans awaiting the release of the *Fruiting Bodies* 'talking book' are likely to be disappointed, according to Grim Reaper Design. For, despite advertisements in FEAR, STARBURST, WEIRD TALES, MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI and DAGON, interest was not high enough to make the publication of the tape, on which Brian Lumley read his own British Fantasy Award-winning story, a worthwhile enterprise. Lumley's best short story will now lead a Tor Books collection entitled FRUITING BODIES AND OTHER FUNGI, a "big fat collection of the best of Brian Lumley" (his own words). In addition, NECROSCOPE 5: DEAD SPAWN will appear from Tor in the Spring of next year, with ICED ON ARAN, the fourth in the Dreamlands series, appearing from Headline before the end of this year. Lumley, surely Britain's most prolific horror writer, already has *forty* books coming out within the next five years, not including the rumoured NECROSCOPE spin-off VAMPIRE WORLD, a trilogy centred around the late Harry Keogh's twin sons . . .

ZINE SCENE

MIDNIGHT GRAFFITI, the best horror magazine in America, WORKS, the best illustrated science fiction magazine in Britain, and CEREBRETRON, the natural successor to INTERZONE, all have interesting new issues to peruse. MG#5 can be had from James Van Hise, 13101 Sudan Road, Poway, CA 92064. WORKS #6 will soon be available from Dave Hughes (different one!), 12 Blakestones Road, Slaithwaite, Huddersfield HD7 5UQ, and a mere pound will secure you a copy of CB#10, available from Alex Bardy, 28b Gladsmuir Road, London N19 3JX. A full-page *Necrofile* special on each of these magazines will appear over the next few issues.

COMIC RELIEF

DC/Titan collections are a big thing at the moment. The next month or so will no less than four major collections of interest to CREW readers. First up is Dean Motter's THE PRISONER (subject of SKELETON CREW Number 6), the hugely popular comic book based on the hugely popular TV series. The 192-page, £9.95 collection will be in full colour, as will SANDMAN: THE DOLL'S HOUSE and the long-awaited V FOR VENDETTA collection, both due for June/July. David Lloyd, exceptional artist on V, is lined up for an exclusive CREW interview, as is John Constantine, star of HELLBLAZER, the fourth black-and-white collection of which features reprints of issues 11-14 and an introduction by Roz Kaveney. THE PRISONER, V FOR VENDETTA and SANDMAN all feature brand new painted covers.

71 NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON WC1A 1DG. 071 836 4179 AND 071 379 6042 • 29 SYDNEY STREET, BRIGHTON, SUSSEX BN1 4EP. 0273 687620 • 5 DUKE STREET, CARDIFF CF1 2AY. 0222 228885 • 36 DAWSON STREET, DUBLIN 2, IRELAND. 0001 710 688 • 168 BUCHANAN STREET, GLASGOW G1 2LW. 041 331 1215 • 7 DEER WALK, SPECIALIST ARCADE, CENTRAL MILTON KEYNES MK9 3AB. 0908 677 556 • 17 PRUDHOE PLACE, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE, NE1 7PE. 091 261 9173 • 129 MIDDLE WALK, BROADMARSH CENTRE, NOTTINGHAM, NG1 7LN. 0602 584706 • MAIL ORDER, c/o 71 NEW OXFORD STREET, LONDON WC1A 1DG. 01 497 2150

FORBIDDEN
PLANET

PHOTO: Seamus A Ryan

The first of our monthly guest reviewers is best-selling British novelist Stephen Gallagher, author of *Chimera*, *Down River* and *Rain*.

PICKING the BONES

ADVENTURELAND by Stephen Harris (Headline, £12.95)

It would be fascinating to sit in as an observer inside a small child's head the first time that he or she ever visits a fairground. For places supposedly devoted to pleasure, they leave some pretty scary and lifetime-lasting impressions . . . and yet, almost in a parallel to the horror story itself, they're something that we find ourselves drawn to again and again. The appeal is almost Dionysian, both dark and thrilling at the same time; it's there at its most apparent in the gaudy travelling show run by tough and shifty types that drifts into town and pulls in the children with bright lights and loud music, before moving on to leave them dazed and exhilarated and with the faint but unmistakable yearning to follow. The phenomenon is its most carefully-disguised in Disneyland, the so-called Happiest Place on Earth, which doesn't even move. But don't be fooled by disguises — lift the bonnet, and the engine is exactly the same. Remember WESTWORLD?

And while you're at it, remember SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES, and BLIND VOICES, and THE FUNHOUSE, and try not to think of how many naff movies you've seen that have placed their climaxes in yet another deserted funfair . . . and then set all of that mental furniture aside in order to give ADVENTURELAND a fair reading. Stephen Harris' debut novel is an often effective addition to the fairground sub-genre, with energy and humour in the writing and a well-evoked sense of the milieu in which the characters move.

The main players are a couple of decently-observed if non-too-deep teenagers, Dave Carter and Sally Harrison, whose friends Phil and Judy disappear on the AdventureLand Ghost Train after a week of portents and omens including a near-drowning and the appearance of a spectral black claw in a Basingstoke bathroom. The Ghost Train proves to be a portal to a HELLRAISER-style otherworld, as Dave discovers when comparing the ride's exterior measurements to the time spent inside and the distance travelled . . . after which, with an increasing roll-call of the inexplicably missing, it becomes inevitable that Dave will have to go forth and do what's necessary.

I've a few complaints — the writing sometimes veers into indulgence, and I'm rather cool toward plotting which requires characters to act with no other motivation than an intuitive certainty that they're 'meant' to do something or other — but overall, the message here is that Harris ought to be worth keeping an eye on. ADVENTURELAND sometimes reads like a compendium of everything that the author ever enjoyed in a novel or wanted to say in one of his own, but that can sometimes be a useful purpose for debut novels to serve. Some writers spring on us fully-formed, as if from the head of Zeus . . . but then, what do *they* do for an encore?

Jacket courtesy of Headline Books

THE NIGHT OF THE MOONBOW by Thomas Tryon (Hodder & Stoughton, £12.95)

Tryon was one of the key figures in the early '70s horror boom; his books HARVEST HOME and THE OTHER rank along with such works as ROSEMARY'S BABY, THE FURY and 'SALEM'S LOT in the way that they took what had traditionally been a genre of reclusiveness — solitary young men on walking holidays being pursued along the sea-coast by nameless nightmares, ageing spinsters with lumbering *things* in their attics that no-one else can hear, a whole gamut of repressed sexuality and post-Victorian guilt (*Weird Tales* adherents, express your outrage here) — and gave it to a more modern, almost soap-operatic sensibility. But after those two early titles, Tryon's writing career headed off into the realms of the Hollywood glitz novel — starlets, backstabbing, champagne and bonking — and he seemed to have been lost to the genre forever.

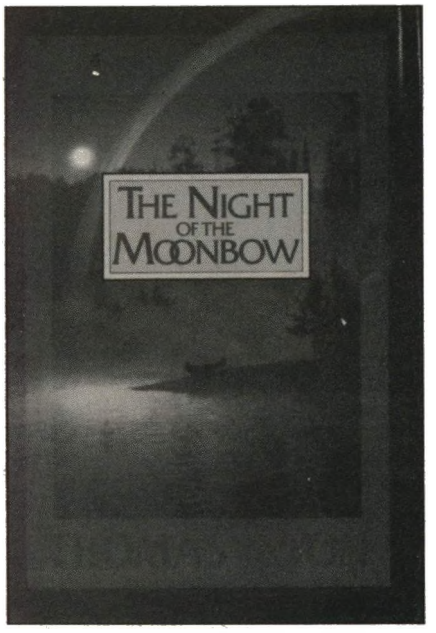
Until now, NIGHT OF THE MOONBOW has been heralded as his return to horror,

and a triumphant one at that. But is it? All of the elements would seem to be there but for me they never quite gel into a horror novel as such, in the same way that five leather jackets and a hundredweight of steak don't make a cow. It's almost a gentle book, never stretching credulity and never letting you feel that you're slumming too close to where the nasty stuff lurks . . . the result being, of course, that the reader begins to yearn for exactly that.

It's set in an American boys' summer camp in the year 1938, 'Camp Friend-Indeed', the kind of place where cold showers and Christian virtues are seen as the route to moral health, legitimising a regime of conformity and competition in which the misfit is likely to suffer. The misfit at the centre of the story is Leo Joaquim, nicknamed 'Wacko Wackeem', a gangling orphan with some nightmarish memories and an ineptitude in the gung-ho pursuits of the camp that increasingly mark him out as more of a burden to his fellows than a team player. It's almost as if LORD OF THE FLIES had been buried deep within one of those Disney TV specials of the '60s.

The writing is honest and meticulous and pretty well flawless, the observation is good and the evocation of the long-ago summer of 1938 is well achieved. Where the book faltered for me was in its sense of drive; the minor moments and developments accumulate steadily to make a convincing whole, but the broad strokes and bigger moments seemed rather to be lacking. It's not a bad book by any means, but there are times when you're being carried along and you can't help wondering about exactly where it is that you're going.

And no, it isn't a horror novel . . . although one gets the sense that only a born horror novelist could have written it. In tone and atmosphere it's rather like Straub's SHADOWLAND without the overt supernatural element. And if you can imagine how SHADOWLAND would play without that element . . . well, you may have some idea of the problem here.



Jacket courtesy of Hodder & Stoughton

BY BIZARRE HANDS: Stories by Joe R Lansdale (Mark V Zeisling 246pp)

If you haven't at least *heard* of Joe Lansdale yet, unplug your head from the sandpit quickly; he's one of the fastest-rising authors in the field and seems to be counted as a personal discovery by everyone who's picked up on him in the past couple of years. It's a reputation that's been gained almost entirely by word of mouth and with an absolute minimum of hype -— but then, Lansdale's is a talent that would be difficult to package and sell in any conventional way. This is his first collection of short stories and pulls together material from sources that range from University small-press magazines to Skipp and Spector's BOOK OF THE DEAD. The collection is, in fact, a small-press publication itself, although the production and design are first-rate (a suitably disturbing JK Potter photomontage on the dust jacket, and interior illustrations by Mark A Nelson) and the overall feel is of a very classy piece of work. The choice of typeface is slightly puzzling — it's the kind that looks like typewriter lettering even though it's been set in the normal way — and I can tell you that at least one reader found it a little hard to get used to, finding that it diminished the effect of some of the opening pages.

The quality of the stories varies, as you might expect with such a gathering-in of the work until now, but the overall standard is high. Those that have stayed with me most are the title story and the perverse and wonderful *Fish Night*, which kicks off the collection. My main reservation here is over the thorny problem of the short story that goes on to find a new life as part of a novel; here we have *Boys Will Be Boys*, which was expanded to become THE NIGHTRUNNERS, *The Windstorm Passes*, which provided episodes for Lansdale's excellent short novel THE MAGIC WAGON, and *Hell Through A Windshield*, which is in effect a prospectus for THE DRIVE-IN. Together these make up a fair proportion of what isn't exactly a huge page count, and give rise to a dilemma . . . if you're prepared to pay the high import price then you're probably a committed reader, and a committed reader will already be familiar with much of what's been included.

What to do about it? Well, completists will be going for the collection anyway. Otherwise I'd be wrong to urge that you should grab it at all costs (those costs being as steep as they are £25 in at least one instance that I've seen). The ideal situation would be to see a fatter mass-market edition some way further down the line with added stories to give more of a context to the repeated material.

But that's a quibble that reflects on the book, and not on the writing itself. If you can't wait for an expanded collection, go to the novels . . . and if you've grabbed all the novels and you're waiting moodily for the next one then all I can say is, welcome to the club.

Next Issue: Brian Blessed.

Jacket courtesy of Seamus A Ryan

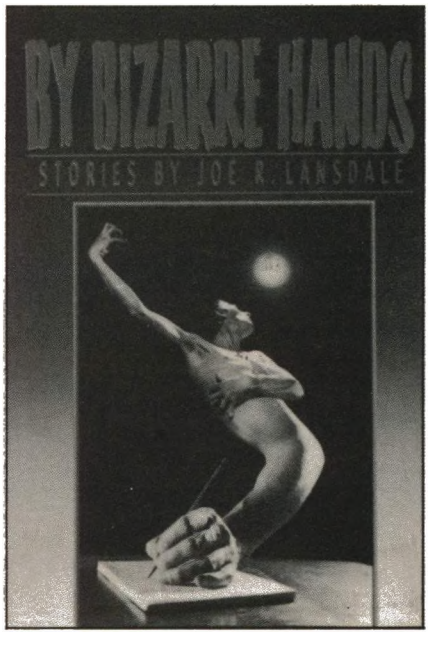


Illustration by Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

James Wallis, this month's comics reviewer, is a freelance subversive from London. Interests include graphic narrative, roleplaying, violent music and situationism.

The new decade has obviously inspired Alan Moore. After spending much of 1989 concluding old stories and producing lacklustre short tales, the man unfortunate enough to have been dubbed the greatest living comics writer has produced two new serials: BIG NUMBERS illustrated by Bill Sienkiewicz and published by Moore's company Mad Love; and FROM HELL with Eddie Campbell, published in the horror anthology TABOO. After the hype that surrounded WATCHMEN and Moore's subsequent self-exile from comics fandom, can either of them possibly live up to expectations?.

Big numbers

(Mad Love, £2.75)

by Alan Moore and Bill Sienkiewicz

BIG NUMBERS, to be published in twelve black and white parts, takes its inspiration from the current sexy-science topic of Chaos Theory, with its tenets that closed systems are not predictable and huge effects can arise from the most trivial causes. It is set in Hampton, a thinly disguised and exhaustively photo-referenced version of Moore's home town of Northampton, where an American conglomerate is planning to build a huge shopping mall. This may seem a ridiculously mundane subject for a comic, let alone one written by a writer of Moore's reputation but with the characters, tensions and potential for culture clash that are shown here it is clear that, as with chaos theory, the smallest problem will be enough to bring the whole structure crashing down.

The first issue does little more than introduce the cast of characters and tentatively begin the plot, and like most of Moore's first issues it is a little disappointing. It has moments of brilliance:the shattering of the window of a moving train and a short scene on a bus are both genuinely chilling. Bill Sienkiewicz's art has settled down after the excesses of STRAY TOASTERS to a more realistic style, and he knows exactly how to draw maximum effect from seemingly mundane subjects. His characters are faintly caricatured and angular, and the backgrounds loom oppressively, dark and alien. Unfortunately it is impossible to empathise with any of the characters in the first issue; but since I can't think of a single Sienkiewicz character with whom I have ever empathised I would put this down to the art rather than to Moore's characterisation.

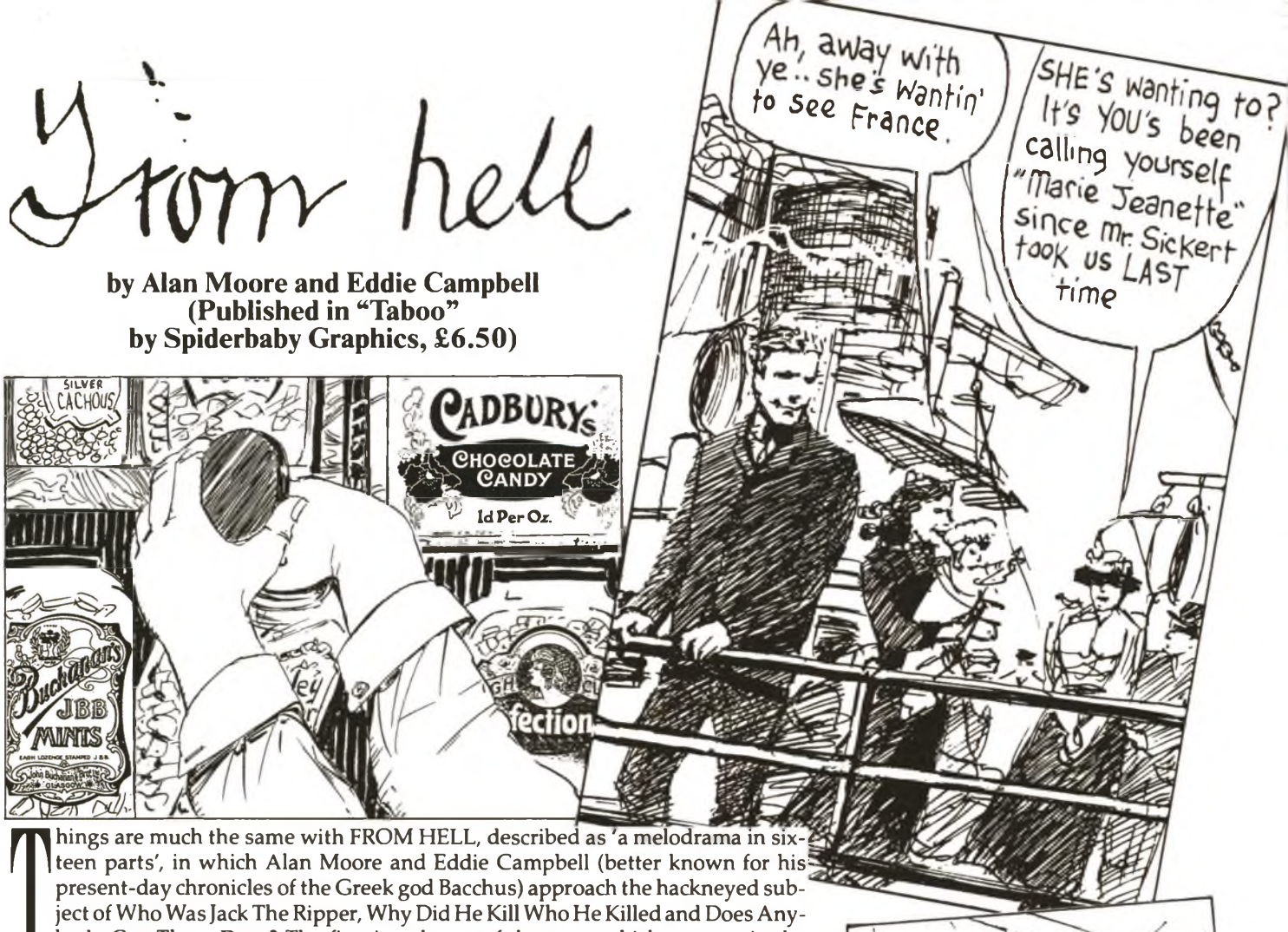
BIG NUMBERS is not a conventional horror story, but very little that Alan Moore does can be called conventional. Splatter fans and those who like their terror to come from excesses of emotions and gore will be disappointed, but this first issue lays the potential for genuine horror and surprise later in the story, sowing seeds of tension which are sure to be harvested in abundance during the rest of the series.

Illustrations by Bill Sienkewicz

YOU WEREN'T!
AND THESE INJECTIONS, THEY TAKE YOUR MIND OFF IT, DO THEY?
OH, ABSOLUTELY. I DON'T THINK ABOUT SEX AT ALL.
NOT THESE DAYS.

From hell

by Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell
(Published in "Taboo"
by Spiderbaby Graphics, £6.50)


Ah, away with ye.. she's wantin' to see France.
SHE's wanting to? It's YOU's been calling yourself "Marie Jeanette" since Mr. Sickert took us LAST time
SILVER CACHOUS
CADBURY's
CHOCOLATE CANDY
Id Per Oz.
Buchanan's
JBB MINTS

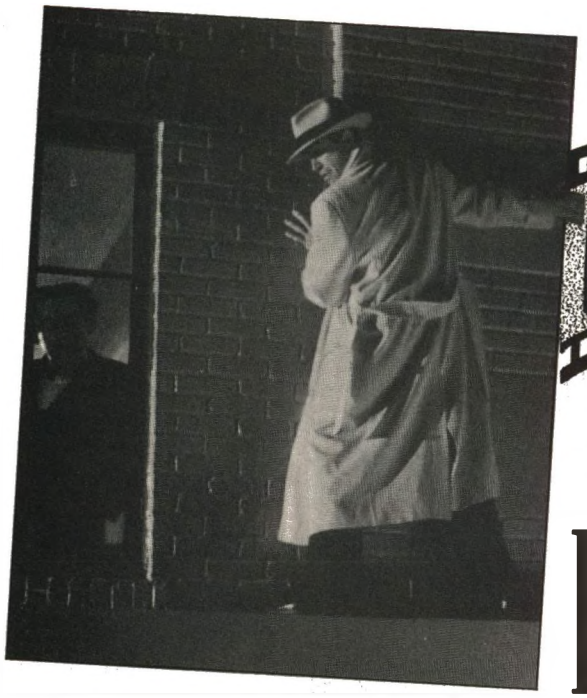
Things are much the same with FROM HELL, described as 'a melodrama in sixteen parts', in which Alan Moore and Eddie Campbell (better known for his present-day chronicles of the Greek god Bacchus) approach the hackneyed subject of Who Was Jack The Ripper, Why Did He Kill Who He Killed and Does Anybody CareThese Days? The first instalment of the story which appears in the second issue of the excellent horror-anthology comic TABOO does little more than establish two plot threads, following a path that is already well-trodden in connecting the royal family with the Freemasons to the murderer. But FROM HELL is no docu-drama, or attempt at the new theory about the Whitechapel Murders. Rather it is a fiction built around factual roots, and Moore can be relied upon not to follow conventional interpretations of existing material. The second part of the story, which had merely simmered in the first part, really begins to boil. It follows the life of Sir William Withey Gull, a noted surgeon who gain has been linked to the Ripper crimes, through his childhood, his medical training and career and his initiation into the Freemasons up to one particular incident that ties in to the first part of the story. The episode is self-contained and only one part is immediately recognisable as part of the plot of the first issue but this is nevertheless a superb and often chilling piece of storytelling. Moore uses linking techniques and running themes to emphasise certain moments in a way which is often copied by "hot" new writers, but rarely if ever equalled. This excellently crafted writing is complemented by Eddie Campbell's art, as scratchy and impressionistic as ever but given extra depth through his expert use of textures, giving each page an appearance of being created from Victorian steel engravings or early photographs.

Illustrations by Eddie Campbell

Like much of Moore's work, FROM HELL is not a linear story. Each part will link to the others through reference and shared themes, but the time line is not continuous and the plot is convoluted and demanding. Those readers new to this form of storytelling in comics may be a little confused or even disappointed, but just as one cannot deduce the picture on a tapestry by examining the threads used to weave it, so we must wait until Moore has woven a few more of the threads of this story together before we can begin to guess at the form of his finished work. On the basis of the two parts already seen, the completed picture will be startling and almost entirely unexpected. I can say with the benefit of hindsight that it never pays to double-guess an Alan Moore storyline.

Of the two stories, so far only FROM HELL can really be described as a horror story; its chilling nature coming from Moore's skill with the dialogue situation; but both promise much future issues. He has overcome the slightly contrived feeling of WATCHMEN and these new works promise to provide much reading and debate in the months to come. Forget SWAMP THING, MARVELMAN, WATCHMEN or V FOR VENDETTA, Alan Moore is only now hitting his stride.

". . . Alan Moore is only now hitting his stride."



DICK TRACY: ". . . the hit Beatty has sought for so long?"

BACK TO THE FUTURE III: ". . . will be seen by many as the best of the trio."

Film Crew

DICK TRACY

Directed by Warren Beatty

Stars: Beatty, Madonna, Al Pacino

In the footsteps of BATMAN comes the equally-hyped movie of another comic strip character. Comparisons are numerous; both spent over a decade in pre-production, both had astronomical budgets; but what of the film? Well, it's certainly not what people are going to expect.

Beatty's Tracy, the epitomy of the square-jawed hero, has to contend with countless underworld hoods, who all have a physical distortion of some kind or another, in a plan to eradicate him hatched by Pacino's midget Godfather of crime. Of course, there's romance along the way as well, as Madonna's Breathless Mahoney seductively lures our hero with exceedingly lyrical songs. The action is fast, in places furious, and is unnervingly close to watching a cartoon that's come to life.

The imagery of the eight colour film provides some truly haunting scenes, and there's always a suspicion that the film-noir style and shadow-strewn atmosphere was inspired by Anton Furst's work on BATMAN. It's unfair to say that really, but films trying to achieve a 1940's stylisation are bound to be compared from now on.

A slightly distracting element comes from trying to guess who's who under the prosthetic make-up of the villains. Is that Jack Nicholson? Could that be Dustin Hoffman? James Caan? Dick Van Dyke? the list is endless. Overall, DICK TRACY is a success, an exceptionally fine and lovingly crafted realisation of a well-loved character. Perhaps the hit Beatty has sought for so long?

BACK TO THE FUTURE III

Directed by Robert Zemeckis

Stars: Michael J. Fox, Christopher Lloyd, Mary Steenburgen

This lucrative trilogy draws to it's conclusion, having raised Fox from a sitcom star to an american cultural icon, with the labyrinthian web of plot devices pointing the way for Marty McFly to head home for the final time to the decidedly dated Reaganite America of 1985.

Doc Brown is stranded in 1890, and besides rescuing Lloyd's wonderfully manic genius with a sanity problem, Marty has to rectify the mess created by Biff's time-hopping excursions in the previous film. The Doc stored the Delorean in a cave, waiting through the years for Marty to receive his message and speed to his assistance, but it's not that easy. Once in 1890, there will be no fuel for the journey back, hence the introduction of a steam train halfway through the film. Shunting and pushing the car will achieve the all important miles per hour, and yes, the hoverboards return for a surprise appearance on the train.

People confused by the high-tech speed of the imagery in *Part II* are in for a surprise; the pace has changed dramatically, special effects are practically non-existant, having been substituted for careful story-telling. It goes without saying that there are some breathtaking set pieces; Marty's lynching and the Doc's girlfriend (Steenburgen) caught on a runaway train to name but two, but Zemeckis presents us with a finished product that may well be seen by many as the best of the trio. And keep watching till the end, since Lloyd has a marvellous final appearance just when you think it's all over.

SPEAKEASY

THE ORGAN OF THE COMICS WORLD

NEWS FROM DC, MARVEL, FLEETWAY, UK AND US INDEPENDENTS

▪

COMPREHENSIVE US/UK SHIPPING GUIDE

▪

BRITAIN'S ONLY REGULAR COMICS CHARTS - TOP 30, INDEPENDENTS, GRAPHIC NOVELS, READERS' RAVES

▪

INTERVIEWS AND FEATURES ON ALL ASPECTS OF COMICS

▪

MOVIE NEWS, GOSSIP, TRIVIA, CLASSIFIED ADS AND MORE

SPEAKEASY ▪ MONTHLY ▪
£1 FROM ALL GOOD COMIC SHOPS

THE GRAVEYARD

FREE LISTS
OF QUALITY SCIENCE FICTION, FANTASY AND HORROR.
PAPERBACKS, HARD COVERS AND MAGAZINES, SMALL PRESS ITEMS, IMPORTS, SIGNED LIMITEDS, ETC, ETC.
WRITE NOW:
FANTASTIC LITERATURE, (DEPT SC1), 25 AVONDALE ROAD, RAYLEIGH, ESSEX SS6 8NJ (0268) 747564

WANTED
Role playing games, scenarios, magazines, etc. R.S. Games specialises in mail order-buying, selling and exchanging new and used gaming material. For latest price list and further details please send a SAE to:
R. S. Games
36 Deers Wood Road, West Green, Crawley, W. Sussex RH11 7JN
Tel: 0293 541988

ADVENTURE INTO YOUR MOST TERRIBLE NIGHTMARES WITH
Wildest Dreams
FAST DELIVERY MAIL ORDER SPECIALISTS

Shadowrun	£13.00	Call of Cthulhu 4th Ed	£10.50
Shadowrun screen	£6.00	Cthulhu Now	£9.50
Mercurial	£4.50	Terror Australis	£9.00
Dream Chipper	£4.50	Dreamlands	£9.00
DNA / DOA	£4.50	Creatures of Dreamlands	£7.50
Street Samurai	£6.50	AD&D Player Handbook	£8.50
Cyberpunk	£11.00	AD&D Dungeon Master Guide	£8.00

MANY MORE GAMES IN STOCK
U.K. – All orders add 60p Post and Packaging
Overseas – Surface Mail add 30% (minimum £1.20)
Wildest Dreams, 12 Pennant Avenue, West Derby, Liverpool L12 5JX
For faster service order by telephone: 051-256 0030

MOVIE BOULEVARD
SOUNDTRACKS: 6000 Plus items on CD, Record and Singles. Imports, New Releases & Deletions.
VIDEOS: 8000 plus titles (NEW) available on VHS only. Latest releases and all currently available titles.
FILM MEMORABILIA: Thousands of Film Posters, Stills (sets), Books etc.
CATALOGUES: For each catalogue please send either a Cheque or P.O for 50p or 4 IRC's (overseas)
MOVIE BOULEVARD LIMITED, DEPT SC
BAKER HOUSE, 9 NEW YORK ROAD
LEEDS LS2 9PF
TELEPHONE: (0532) 422888 (10m-6pm)

Play-by-Mail Games
The Gaming Phenomenon of the 90's
Experience professionally run Multi-Player Games which you can play when it suits you: On the train, in your lunch hour.
Make new friends all over Britain and Europe.
All you require is a pencil and your imagination.
Send for your Free Information Pack
Write to Sloth Enterprises, Play-by-Mail Company of the year, at:
Sloth Enterprises
FREEPOST
Southampton SO9 1BH
No stamp required inside the UK

ATTENTION FILM FANS!
Horror or fantasy/Sci-Fi fan searching for specific video titles, or with videos for sale or exchange? Join ***PRIME GOTHIC*** – the only International Film Collector's Club and you can:
- Trade videos with club members worldwide
- Buy new videos at up to 20% off R.R.P.
- Get regular discounts on products like masks and books
- See more films than you ever thought possible!

For full details, please send a first class stamp to:
PRIME GOTHIC
PLUTO ENTERPRISES
27 Old Gloucester Street
London WC1N 3XX, UK

SPIRIT games
Crawling with monsters, aliens, or ghouls (We serve normal people too!)
Unit 19, Inshops Centre
68-74 Church St.,
Croydon, Surrey
Tel: 081-760 0078
98 Station St.
Burton on Trent, Staffs
Tel: 0283 511293

THE GRAVEYARD

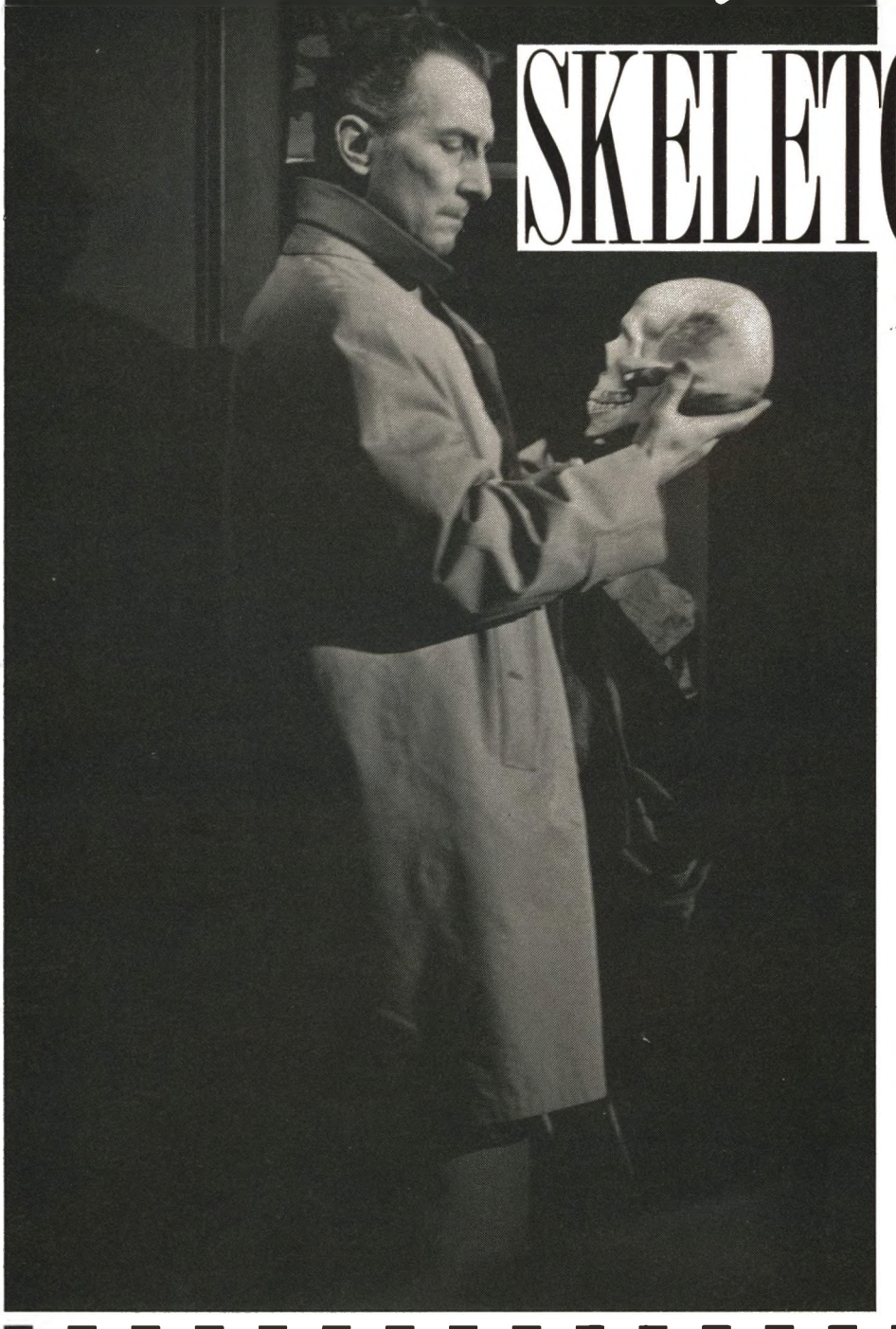
The most cost effective way to reach the thousands of horror fans. For just £25 (+vat) per month 'Take a Tombstone'. Just fill in the coupon below and send your copy. (size shown) to the address below. Dead Clever eh!

Reach 30,000 HORRIFIC HOUSEHOLDS USE SKELETON CREW TO PROMOTE YOUR BUSINESS FROM £25+VAT

To: The Graveyard, Skeleton Crew, Argus House, Boundary Way, Hemel Hempstead HP2 7ST
I enclose my Cheque/Postal Order* for £ _____ for _____ insertions, made payable to Argus Specialist Publications (* delete as necessary), or Please debit my Access/Barclaycard No.
[ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ][ ] Expiry Date _____
£ _____ for _____ insertions. Note: All ads must be pre-paid. No reimbursements for cancellations.
Name _____
Address _____
_____ Post Code _____
Day Time Tel. No. _____
Signature _____ Date _____

You too could be holding your head in your hands if you don't subscribe to

SKELETON CREW



Take the headache out of making sure you never miss an issue by subscribing to

SKELETON CREW

We will ensure that each issue drops through your letter box at no extra charge to you*.

All you have to do is return the order form with your payment, take two asprin and RELAX!

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

UK	**£23.40**
Europe	**£28.90**
Middle East	**£29.30**
Far East	**£31.90**
Rest of the World	**£30.90**

Airmail Rates on Request

* Subscriptions are sent post free to any address in the UK. Overseas subscriptions include postage.

Photocopies of the order form are acceptable if so desired.

Please commence my 12 issue subscription to Skeleton Crew with the ..... issue

I enclose my cheque/money order for £ ..... made payable to ARGUS SPECIALIST PUBLICATIONS

or debit my Access/Barclaycard number ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐ Card expiry date .....

Signature ..... Name .....

Address .....

..... Postcode .....

Please return this coupon with your remittance to:

Select Subscriptions Limited, 5 River Park Estate, Billet Lane, Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 1HL, United Kingdom.

EDITOR
Dave Hughes

EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES
Adrian Rigelsford
Seamus A Ryan
Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

ART ASSOCIATES
John Bolton
Kevin A Cullen

ADVERTISING
Tony Flanagan
Maria Wade

GROUP EDITOR
Stuart Cooke

DESIGNER
Mark Newton

PHOTOGRAPHER
Seamus A Ryan

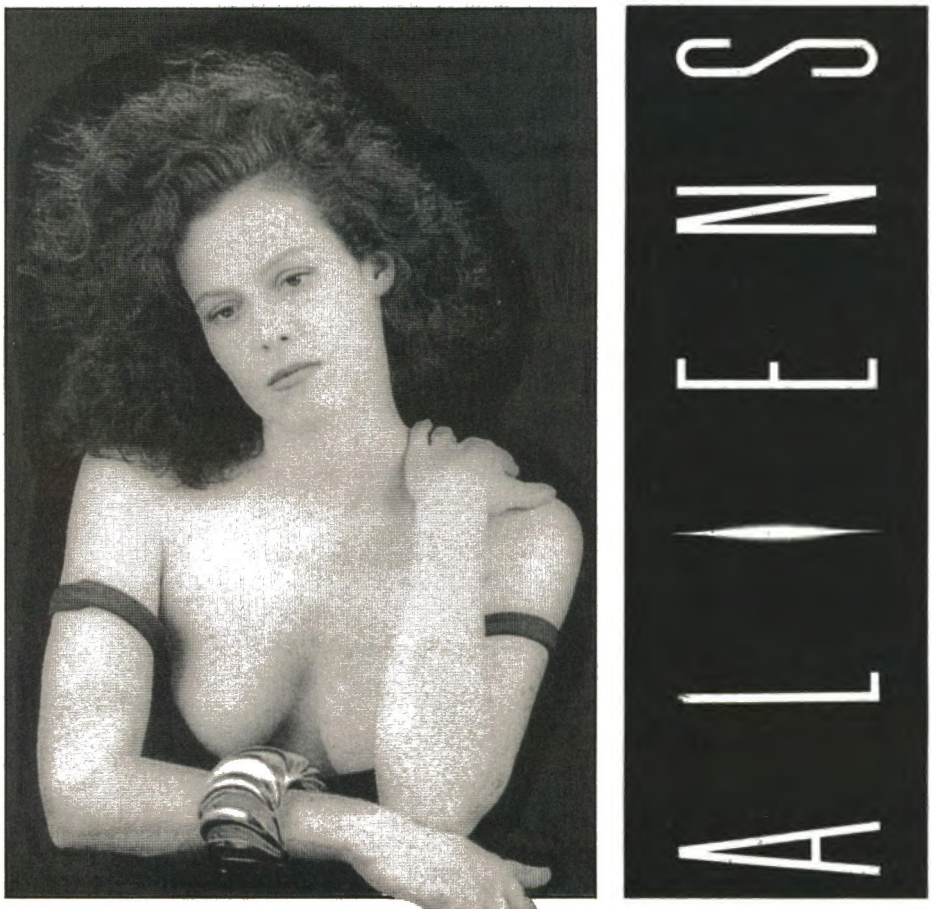
SENIOR WRITERS
Neil Gaiman
Philip Nutman

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
Stephen King
Stephen Gallagher
Mark Morris
James Wallis
Stuart Green
Jim Campbell
Matthew W J Pook
Adrian Rigelsford
Nick Belcher

CONTRIBUTING ARTISTS
John Bolton
Kevin Cullen
Clive Barker
Mike Nicholson
Dave McKean
Eddie Campbell
Bill Sienkewicz
Jim Campbell
Lee Brimmicombe-Wood

"Game over, man, game over!"

The next issue of SKELETON CREW is the ALIENS special, featuring articles, interviews and features relating to the classic science fiction/horror movie starring Sigourney Weaver (pictured below). Toplining Philip Nutman's exclusive interview with ALIENS and ABYSS director James Cameron, the issue features original fiction by Shaun Hutson and Nicholas Vince, an introduction by Chris Foss, one of the concept artists from ALIEN; artwork by Mark Nelson, Chris Fitzgerald and H.R. Giger; a feature on Dark Horse's ALIENS comic series, video reviews by Brian Blessed, a special companion to the ALIENS boardgames featuring a new ALIEN board, and a brand new cover painting by John Bolton. If you haven't subscribed yet, you'll find the ALIENS Special on sale in newsagents and specialist shops from July 20 1990. And on Sunday July 22, you'll find many of the contributors to the issue signing copies at Mega-City Comics (address elsewhere this issue). Come along and meet the contributors and specia guests on the day, particularly if you missed our London launch at the Cafe Munchen.



Thanks this issue go to everyone who contributed something, no matter how small; everyone who turned up for the launch; everyone who believed in the magazine (they know who they are); everyone who placed an ad, or bought a copy, and especially to John, Clive, Neil, Adrian, Lee, Seamus, Steve, Phil, Paul, Stuart, not forgetting Nick and Rik who kind of started it all. Issue 2/1 is dedicated to Michelle Joanna Davies, who knows why.

"It doesn't mean we're engaged or anything . . ."

Issue 2/2, *Aliens* Special, on sale July 20 1990.

All reasonable care is taken in the preparation of the magazine contents, but the publishers cannot be held legally responsible for errors. Where mistakes do occur, a correction will normally be published as soon as possible afterwards. All prices and data contained in advertisements are accepted by us in good faith as correct at the time of going to press. Neither the advertisers nor the publishers can be held responsible, however, for any variations affecting price or availability which may occur after the publication has closed for press.

ADVERTISEMENT

MICHAEL J. AUTREY, BOOKSELLER

13624 Franklin Street, No. 5
Whittier, California 90602
(213) 945-6719

Dear Stephen King Fans:

By now, most of you are aware of Doubleday's plans to re-issue THE STRAND, but for those of you who aren't the following may prove of interest.

On April 25th (my birthday), Doubleday published the unexpurgated version of Stephen King's "The Strand". This version has a new beginning and a new end ... it has been updated for the nineties, and is approximately 500 pages longer than the original. The book will include 12 black and white illustrations by renowned artis Bernie Wrightson (CYCLE OF THE WEREWOLF). The first printing of the trade edition was 400,000 copies.

There was some concern that the British edition would precede the American; however, I have it on good authority that the British edition, originally scheduled for the end of March, was pushed back to May 9th, so that the American edition was, without question, the true first; price $24.95.

As for the signed, limited edition (see the back cover advertisement for a picture), it is truly spectacular. an absolutely stunning book. My congratulations to Peter Schneider and Doubleday for this masterpiece. they have truly done justice to the book, which many believe is King's best. I cannot think of any way to improve on what they've done.

Perhaps it will help if I describe the book to you: it is full grain leather. The book is stamped in gold; King's name and the book title are stamped in red. The spine has four raised hubs. A better grade of paper is used in this edition.

The end papers are red silk moire. The corners of the pages are rounded. The book has been printed in two colours: black (for text) and red (for ornamental designs).

The book is encased in a varnished, wooden box stained in ebony (black), with a brass plate on top of the box. The top of the box lifts up and the book is laid inside, extracted by a silk pull-ribbon. The interior of the box is lined with red silk. The book itself has a glassine wrapper. The design motif is supposed to suggest the "family bible", since King had indicated in his preface to this edition that the book is a "long tale of dark Christianity". To protect the book during shipping, a double, reinforced, customized box has been designed.

The good news is: I have lots of copies of the trade edition for sale and can pretty much guarantee first printings. Now, for the bad news: I have copies of THE STRAND Limited available. However, they are coming to me from secondary sources and are expensive. I have not been successful in obtaining copies directly from Doubleday, as each sales rep was allotted only 33 copies to distribute amongst all of their accounts. If you find a good source for these, please let me know. Also, if you have copies for sale, I would appreciate knowing that as well. It may still be possible to find copies at retail if you shop around — if you can't, then please call me — the book is worth paying a premium for.

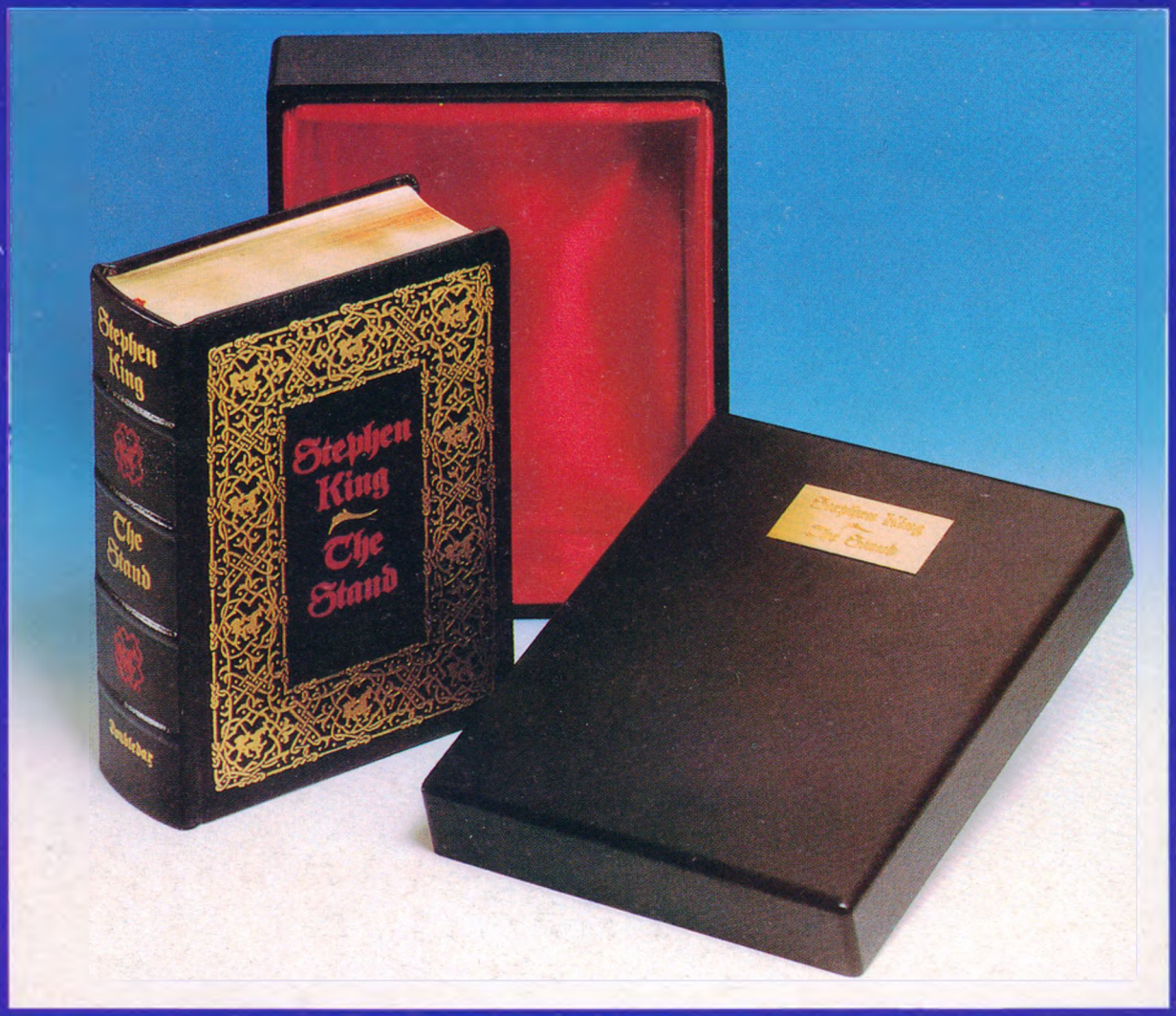
Please understand the uniqueness of this situation. This may well be the nicest King Limited ever done. It is also the first King Limited to be done by a major publishing house. Consequently, the old rules don't apply anymore. I haven't had any better luck finding these at retail than you have.

If you are willing to accept the fact that the demand for these incredible books far exceeds supply, and you are willing to pay a premium for a chance to own one, then I can help you obtain a truly special book. I've already heard of dealers quoting prices much higher than mine. This book is definitely going to continue to rise in value as time goes on.

I only have a few of these available, so don't hesitate to call me as soon as you get this letter.

As a side note, I would like to mention that Doubleday will be simultaneously re-issuing their other King titles: CARRIE, SALEM'S LOT, NIGHT SHIFT and THE SHINING. These will be redesigned as 6"x9" books with reset type and much sturdier bindings. CARRIE will be $18.95, NIGHT SHIFT will be $19.95, SALEM'S LOT and THE SHINING will each be $21.95. I will have all of these available, along with THE STAND.

Sincerely,
Michael J. Autrey.



More Exciting News For

STEPHEN KING

FANS

COMING SOON
DON'T BE LEFT OUT

Write and ask to be put on my mailing list today

Michael J. Autrey 13624 Franklin Street #5 Whittler, CA 90602 0101 (213) 945-6719

© DOUBLEDAY. USED BY PERMISSION.